

Developing a customer-centric digital marketing communication strategy

Commissioner: Salusfin Oy

Daria Lokteva

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>The present study relates to the field of digital marketing communication. The purpose of the study is to create a customer-centric digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin, a technological start-up company in need of an effective digital strategy. The key issue of the study is to provide an insight on how digital marketing communication tools can fulfil the needs and benefit the company while adding value for the customers. The research questions addressed in the study are 1. What can Salusfin achieve with a digital marketing communication strategy? 2. How can a digital marketing communication strategy contribute to reaching, interacting, converting, engaging and nurturing the target audience for Salusfin? The scope of the study is limited to digital marketing communication tools in the owned and earned media contexts. The focus is placed on the most appropriate and effective tools for Salusfin digital strategy, i.e. company's website, blog and social network platforms, excluding the mobile and e-mail marketing tools. The thesis work belongs to a qualitative type of study with action-oriented methodological approach, where theoretical data, strategic models, primary research findings and secondary data are applied in a structured way to create a digital marketing communication strategy. Theoretical frameworks include SOSTAC®, RACE and Multi-channel Marketing Growth Wheel models. A qualitative method is used to analyze and incorporate the primary data collected through interviews. The empirical part of the study includes an application of digital marketing theory, strategic framework, author's own input and contribution of primary research findings to the case study. The study shows that by adopting a digital strategy, Salusfin can take advantage of an effective and systematic approach to building, developing and managing digital marketing communication efforts. Digital marketing communication strategy provides a comprehensive vision for Salusfin, outlines benefits and opportunities of digital strategy and guides effective digital development. It ensures the implementation and management of digital marketing communication initiatives to capture, engage and retain customers, and above all to create added value for them.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Internet has changed tremendously the way business operates. Consequently, the approach to marketing has undergone significant transformation, and marketing has taken new forms. Over the last years, new trends and innovations have emerged that have reshaped the traditional concept and perspective of marketing. Therefore, many traditional marketing methods have become ineffective and obsolete in a new digital era. Digital marketing is growing in importance, it is developing continuously and becoming more complex, as the technology, new digital channels, tools and platforms evolve, and the competition strengthens. It is estimated that the influence of digital marketing will continue to grow in the coming years (Bax et al. 2013, p.15).

Today's marketing is dynamic and interactive; it integrates new advances in technology, in social and mobile domains to create new ways of reaching, engaging and keeping the customers. Due to cost effectiveness and accessibility, digital marketing tools and techniques are today within a reach for big corporations as well as for small businesses, providing a remarkable growth opportunity and global reach of customers (Bax et al., 2013). Hence, digital marketing is nowadays an integral part of marketing efforts for any company, and is particularly essential for a modern start-up company. In the following chapters, digital marketing communication and related concepts will be defined and explained, digital marketing communication tools will be presented, studied in depth and categorized, and a digital marketing communication strategy with a customer-centric approach will be elaborated as an outcome of this thesis work.

1.1 Statement of the problem

As the business environment and market conditions are changing due to technological advances and newly available tools, the marketing dynamics are evolving and new trends emerge in marketing, customer relationship management and customer service fields. Significant changes in consumer behavior and media usage, customer expectations, needs and requirements, as well as a shift of power to customers (Global Social Media Marketing) require adequate response and actions from the companies. Businesses have to focus more and more on consumers' needs, widen the offer and service prop-

osition to benefit the customer, create value-adding experiences, as well as ensure availability and accessibility of relevant information and up-to-date data in digital media. Considering how fast the needs, expectations and requirements of customers grow and market conditions change, the companies have to take actions to service and, most importantly, to anticipate market demand. Not only do the companies have to respond and react dynamically to changing needs and challenge competition, but most importantly they have to think one step ahead of customers and competition, by taking the customer experience to the next level, and ultimately “delivering exceptional satisfaction to a growing number of loyal and engaged customers” (Chaffey and Smith, 2013).

Many digital marketing tactics, such as social media communication, blogs, digital and mobile content marketing, are currently being adapted and used by a variety of B2C and B2B companies, large and small, in the attempt to serve the customers in a superior way. However, online presence as such is not a guarantee of success for anybody. In fact, it is still surprisingly common to come across online marketing channels that are being poorly managed, neglected or not properly followed up (Chaffey and Smith, 2013), and therefore creating frustration among the customers and resulting in a rather opposite effect than what initially was intended. Therefore, the main challenge for a small start-up company is to identify the right digital marketing communication tools to be used, to choose the right methods to apply the tools efficiently as part of a digital marketing strategy, and to dedicate appropriate time and resources to support the digital marketing strategy. Digital marketing communication tools should be used to their full potential to ensure continuous delivery, follow up and optimization of the digital content. The overall digital marketing communication methods should above all work efficiently to capture, engage and retain customers, and create added value for them.

1.2 Background, motivation and need

Initially the subject of digital marketing is a domain of great personal interest to the author due to its relevance in contemporary business and marketing practice, as nowadays e-marketing is not only viewed as a crucial, practical and state-of-the-art tool in business, but it has become an integrated element of any marketing efforts. Because of its significance in the business world today, the field of digital marketing has been given

much attention in recent years, resulting in several studies and research work carried out, as well as numerous theoretical books and articles published on the topic by prominent digital marketing authors, e.g. Chaffey, Solis, Ryan, Charlesworth, Smith, to name a few. Social media has grown in importance and social media platforms have become extremely important, efficient and influential tools that have to be understood, mastered and managed by companies to get closer to their customers in a different way and deliver exceptional customer experience. Techniques and strategies of digital marketing have become accessible to anyone, as long as one has the skills and necessary knowledge, and therefore is able to manage the existing tools efficiently.

The present research work takes into consideration the previously done research and theoretical background on the subject of digital marketing and related concepts, as well as explores in details the digital marketing communication tools that have the potential to create value and engage the customers, and thus provide a source for profit for the company. The digital marketing communication tools are presented, evaluated and categorized using a customer-centric marketing approach, and implemented in the empirical part of the study to create a digital marketing communication strategy for an existing company. This study provides a customer-centric dimension to the subject of digital marketing communication. Moreover, the findings of the research are practically applicable and will be implemented by a Finnish start-up company, Salusfin Oy.

1.3 Company presentation

1.3.1 Salusfin Oy in brief

The commissioner of the thesis study is Salusfin Oy, a Finnish technological start-up company founded in April 2013. The business operates within the IT field and the company's main product is home automation solutions and services. The company's head office is located in Espoo. Salusfin Oy currently employs four people in Finland, including CEO, CTO, CSO and SMA, has a subsidiary in Bangalore, India – Salusfin India Systems and Services Pvt. Ltd., and has two representatives in Germany and the USA.

Salusfin product offering is a home management system providing control and management of home conditions and appliances with a mobile device (a smart phone, a tab or a notebook). The turnkey solution is a combination of hardware, software and cloud services in one package. It is a wireless system providing automation options to manage energy consumption, lighting, home security and surveillance, control home appliances, consumer electronics and other technologies, as well as manage indoor air quality with automated or scheduled tasks – all that via portable mobile devices. Salusfin offers product related services, such as installation and support services, cloud solutions, data storage, profiling service, maintenance and consulting.

The company's first home automation system has been launched and tested in the Indian market through a local partner organization SrivaTech in April 2014, who later became a subsidiary. Throughout 2014, improvements and adjustments were made to the product software based on the testing results and customer feedback, and a new version of mobile application came out in the fourth quarter of 2014. An improved website was launched in November 2014. The sales of the second version of the product were projected to start in India in September 2014. In autumn 2014, a new brand name was created to give the product own identity and recognizable characteristics, and the process to create a simple, yet original, memorable and versatile logo design has started in 2015.

1.3.2 Company's aims

Although the test results and customer feedback on the Salusfin home automation product were positive, the actual sales have not been successful so far, though the company has already a number of potential customers in India. Salusfin is looking for practical digital marketing communication solutions to increase its online presence, and consequently raise awareness about their brand and promote their product and services online. Currently the company has a working informative website with an embedded support function, and company's accounts are created in Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ social platforms. However, online content sourcing, digital performance and digital marketing efforts in website and social media platforms have been limited until now. The management team of Salusfin, commissioning the thesis work, is aware of great potential, cost effectiveness, many possibilities and numerous benefits of digital

marketing, therefore the aim of the present study is to develop these opportunities into an actionable strategic plan.

1.3.3 Connection to thesis work

In order to implement digital marketing efforts efficiently and succeed online, Salusfin needs a comprehensive digital marketing communication strategy. The present thesis study will evaluate the available digital marketing communication tools and techniques, implement a strategic framework, select the appropriate tools, tactics and actions and produce a digital marketing communication strategy that suits the particular needs of Salusfin. By implementing a digital marketing strategic plan, the company will be able to apply the digital marketing communication tools efficiently, and will be able to achieve the desired level of online performance. This study is a valuable and beneficial work for both the company and the author, as the findings are presented in a form of an operational strategic plan created by the author and applicable to a real-life case.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to create a customer-centric digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin. The key issue of the study is to provide an insight on how digital marketing communication tools and tactics can benefit the company while adding value for the customers. The study aims to develop a digital strategy that leverages the digital marketing theory and concepts, theoretical methods and strategic models, and makes use of empirical research data. The author applies theory, strategic frameworks, models and primary research data in a structured way to develop own strategic approach and implement relevant digital marketing communication tools. As an outcome, this thesis work elaborates a digital marketing communication strategy as part of company's digital marketing efforts.

2.2 Research questions

In the process of development of a customer-centric digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin, the study focuses on addressing particular research questions. Formulating the research questions enables better understanding of study objectives, facilitates alignment and structure of the thesis work. The present study aims at providing answers to the following questions:

1. What can Salusfin achieve with a digital marketing communication strategy?
2. How can a digital marketing communication strategy contribute to reaching, interacting, converting, engaging and nurturing the target audience for Salusfin?

2.3 Thesis structure

The thesis work is divided into eight major chapters: Introduction, Research Design, Theoretical Framework, Strategy Development, Expert Interview Input, Reflective Discussion, Managerial Implications and Recommendations, and Conclusions. Introduction (Chapter 1) presents the problem, background, motivation and need for the research, and presents the case company. Research design (Chapter 2) overviews the purpose of the study, defines the research questions, presents the structure and methodology of the research, as well as research limitations. Theoretical framework (Chapter 3) is an extensive theoretical review and analysis of research topic related theory and literature. The theoretical part examines a digital marketing context, provides an overview of key concepts, presents and categorizes digital marketing communication tools. This chapter introduces and explains the strategic framework used in this thesis study: strategic marketing models SOSTAC® and RACE, and the Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel by Smart Insights. Chapter 4, Strategy development, is the empirical part of the study, where theoretical framework is applied to the case study. This chapter develops a digital marketing communication strategy for the case company. Expert interview input (Chapter 5) discusses the empirical findings of expert interviews and their contribution to the digital strategy. Reflective discussion (Chapter 6) is a reflective discussion and critical review of main findings of the study and evaluation of study results. Managerial implications and recommendations for the company are discussed in Chapter 7. Conclusions

(Chapter 8) summarize the aims, objectives, main findings, results and recommendations of the research work and evaluates the outcome.

The research plan can be presented as a process model including five main steps, shown in *Figure 1*. The structure of thesis research is the following:

1. Digital marketing context overview
2. Digital marketing communication tools
3. Strategic marketing planning framework: SOSTAC®, RACE and Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel (2015)
4. Implementation of strategic framework
5. Digital marketing communication strategy (Salusfin).



Figure 1. Research plan structure.

The first part is introductory and presents the digital marketing context, its key concepts and elements. The second part is the presentation and categorization of the main digital marketing communication tools. The third part introduces the strategic digital marketing models and the framework that will be used for the implementation and development of digital marketing communication strategy. The following part is the implementation, where strategic models are combined into a framework for strategy development, as theory and chosen digital tools are put together. The last chapter is the elaboration and formulation of the digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin.

2.4 Methodology

The present thesis work belongs to a qualitative type of study, including a theoretical part and an empirical and implementation part. The theoretical part of the research work comprises a theoretical review of digital marketing theory, includes a classification of digital marketing communication tools and presents the main strategic framework used in the development of the digital marketing communication strategy. They are SOSTAC®, RACE and Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel (MMGW) models. The empirical part of the study includes the application of the theoretical framework to the

case study. It is an action-oriented methodological approach, where theoretical data, strategic models, primary research findings, and secondary data are applied in a structured way to create a digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin.

In the earliest stage of the thesis planning process and through discussions with the case company, a clear need for creation of a digital strategy was established. The author of the study was assigned the role of a digital marketing strategist or/and a consultant with the task of developing a digital marketing strategic plan for Salusfin. To achieve the goal, the author has leveraged the digital marketing theory, presented in the theoretical part of the work, and implemented the theoretical knowledge, models and primary research data in the empirical part, to develop a comprehensive framework and produce a digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin.

A qualitative method of data collection was used for gathering information for the empirical part of the study. The secondary data related to the case company, its product, customers has been gathered directly from Salusfin. Presentations, brochures, flyers, meeting reports, a business plan and other written documents have been provided to the author. Through numerous meetings, discussions, phone calls, chats and even brainstorming sessions with company representatives, the author has collected relevant information and necessary material. Moreover, the author has conducted primary research and collected primary data through interviews. One in-depth interview was conducted with the Chief Marketing and Sales Officer of Salusfin, Ghent Huston. The aim of the interview was to gain a better understanding of the company's situation, its perspective and goals, requirements, needs and vision related to digital marketing communication. The expert interviews were conducted with two digital marketing strategists: 1) Fredrik Holmén, Strategy Director at Mirum Agency, a global digital marketing and advertising agency; and 2) Rasmus Östman, CEO, co-founder and Strategic Director of Genero Oy, a Finnish digital advertising and marketing agency. The main responsibilities of Fredrik Holmén of Mirum Agency include corporate strategy function, brand strategy, customer insights, development of strategic offering and goal based strategies for the clients. Rasmus Östman of Genero is responsible for digital marketing strategy, branding strategy and strategic planning for the customers.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, systematically following an interview guide with 20 open-ended questions. The interview questions were formulated based on the study research questions, and relate directly to the use of strategic models and frameworks in digital marketing communication planning. The questions were identical in both interviews. The interviewees were familiar with questions, as they were provided with the interview guide a few days before the interview upon their request. The first interview lasted one hour, the second interview took one hour and twenty minutes. The interview results were analyzed using a qualitative method, and the findings were applied to the digital strategy. The aim of the interviews was to gain a professional insight into issues related to strategic digital marketing planning, strategic digital marketing tactics and digital marketing communication tools, listen to expert opinions on strategic planning models (SOSTAC, RACE), as well as benchmark the methods, tactics and tools used in professional life. Both interviewees are experts in the field of digital marketing strategy, having first-hand knowledge, skills, expertise and experience of creating successful digital marketing strategies for corporate customers. Therefore, they were the right people to provide valuable and practical insight into digital marketing strategy planning, formulation and implementation. The interview guides are presented in the Appendix 1.

2.5 Study limitations

The field of digital marketing is extensive and constantly evolving. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to cover all possible elements and aspects of digital marketing communication in one single thesis work. Hence, the scope of the study is limited to digital marketing communication tools in the owned and earned media contexts. Paid media digital tools will not be studied, as they are not relevant for Salusfin. Several digital marketing communication tools are explored and classified that correspond to the needs of the company commissioner of the thesis work in terms of customer focus. The area of this study paper is thus delimited to a few digital marketing communication tools and the focus is placed on the most appropriate and effective tools for Salusfin digital strategy, i.e. company's website, blog and social network platforms, excluding the mobile and e-mail marketing tools. Only chosen digital tools and platforms are part of the digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction to digital marketing

Today's reality is that we live in a "connected" and "digitalized" world, as we consume incredibly vast volumes of data, and the modern technology provides the means of accessing, storing and sharing information. To mention a few figures, from a total population of 7,1 billion people worldwide, the number of global internet users is estimated to reach 3 billion or 40% of world population by 2015 (ITU, May 2014). The number of smartphone users is expected to increase to 1,9 billion by 2015 (DazeInfo), while the worldwide social network audience is projected to grow up to 2 billion by 2015 (eMarketer). The figures are constantly growing, and digital technologies are integrating into personal and professional lives. Today companies acknowledge the power and influence of digital marketing, its great potential and opportunities, allocate more budget to that area, and incorporate it into standard practice. (Bax et al. 2013, Ryan, 2014)

3.1.1 Digital marketing overview

Digital marketing incorporates the use of internet or digital technology, in other words all electronically communicated media, such as internet, web or mobile, for the marketing purposes with the aim of achieving marketing objectives (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, Bax et al. 2013, p.23, Technopedia). Digital marketing refers to the marketing function that takes place in the electronic marketplace and fulfils the definition of marketing to identify, anticipate and satisfy customer needs profitably and efficiently in the online environment (Chaffey & Smith, 2013). According to Chaffey and Smith, digital marketing allows companies to capture and attract online prospects by providing value-adding content, and driving customers to the brand. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013). Ryan maintains that through an interactive approach, digital marketing allows to connect with a wider audience, while at the same time it allows a precision targeting of specific niche segments with valuable content (Ryan, 2014). Digital marketing is thus interactive, targeted, dynamic, customer-centric and sophisticated means of customer engagement and retention, marketing communication, customer service, product promotion, brand building, relationship management as well as a source of customer value creation that takes

place in a digital environment. Through engaging and value-adding content and ongoing communication and dialogue, digital marketing aims at reaching and interacting, engaging and finally retaining potential customers, while keeping up the relationship and the engagement with the existing ones.

3.1.2 Digital environment

The digital environment refers to the usage of digital platforms, such as operating systems, internet browsers, e-mail, social media networks or mobile apps, via available electronic devices, such as PC's, laptops, tablets or smartphones. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) Modern internet technologies are extremely dynamic, continuously shaping and changing the online context, influencing the society, buyer behavior, consumption patterns, business and marketing practices. (Charlesworth, 2014, Ryan, 2014). The so-called Web 2.0 phenomenon is a new and revolutionary way of using internet technologies, where users generate content, collaborate and communicate with each other, share data, and are active participants of virtual communities (Wikipedia, Ryan 2014). In the interactive and interconnected digital environment, consumers are enabled to create, publish, access and consume information quickly, easily and on-demand. (Ryan, 2014) Moreover, Ryan emphasizes that consumers are more willing to express themselves and share their opinions online, to form congregations and communities, and they are empowered to manage and control the flow of information they are receiving by personalizing the relevant content. (Ryan, 2014) Companies have developed specific functions in the online context for business purposes. Deans distinguishes three main functional categories for online presence of an organization, which are communication, transaction and relationship enhancement (Deans, 2003). In the same way, Bax et al. refer to the digital context as a so-called *digital hub*, a central point of contact for conversations, transactions and engagement functions. (Bax et al., 2013) These digital contacts and functions represent the basis for corporate digital marketing communications.

3.1.3 Digital content and online presence

Digital marketing communication function is enabled via digital content, which exists in digital landscape in different forms, from text and design, to graphical information, au-

audio and video content, and basically represents information and experiences delivery across a range of platforms and media tools to the end user (Ryan, 2014, Chaffey and Smith, 2013). The main purpose of content is to engage, interact and influence customers; it is a point for contact with the customers, whether they research, purchase or review. (Ryan, 2014). According to Chaffey and Smith, quality content is the key to attracting and retaining customers (Chaffey and Smith, 2013). As the customers and prospects search the web for information, advice, a product or a service, the companies need to understand the audience's needs and provide valuable and relevant content for the customer. (Holliman & Rowley, 2014)

Online presence is the basis for digital marketing, as it involves any aspect of web content and digital footprint that represents the product, brand or organization. (Charlesworth, 2014, Chaffey and Smith, 2013) Online presence refers to the availability, richness and relevance of digital content and information via a range of web tools. Online presence is not merely a company's website, although it continues to be one of the key elements, but it incorporates a "portfolio" of digital media and communication tools, ranging from company's social media network sites, blogs and forums to mobile-optimized sites and mobile apps. (Charlesworth, 2014, Chaffey and Smith, 2013).

3.1.4 Digital communication model

Digital marketing communications serve to engage customers and create unique digital customer experiences, whether it is raising brand awareness, communicating or interacting with customers, promoting products, or maintaining relationships with the customers. Digital communication can happen in different online contexts, such as business-to-business (B2B), business to consumer (B2C), consumer-to-consumer (C2C) and consumer-to-business (C2B). (Chaffey and Smith 2013, p.9) In different contexts, communication flow is addressed to different recipients. Internet technology provides a multi-stage digital communication model, where people are connected and share feedback, experiences, knowledge and interact with each other. It can be depicted as a dialogue between a sender, an opinion leader or "influencer" and other customers (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, Ryan, 2014). When customers form communities to share opinions and talk to each other, the flow of communication becomes a web of conversations revolv-

ing around a topic (Chaffey and Smith 2013, p.121). In order to be close with customers, companies or brands should facilitate and encourage digital communication, which ultimately helps developing strong relationships with customers. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) Moreover, digital communication happens through different channels or media. There are three types of media categories: owned media, paid media and earned media. Owned media refers to digital properties of a brand, such as website, blogs and social presence. Paid media is online advertising that requires investments. While earned media is publicity generated through partner networks, such as publishers, bloggers, influencers, advocates and word-of-mouth. (Chaffey and Smith 2013)

3.1.5 Digital customer experience

Digital marketing is not so much about technology, as it is about understanding, knowing and getting closer to the customers. As in traditional marketing, digital marketers use the available technology to connect with consumers, build enduring and mutually rewarding relationships and ultimately drive sales. (Ryan 2014). The fundamental aim of digital marketing is to offer customers a range of unique and tailored online customer experiences and an enriching service function that can add value for customers at different stages of the buying process, e.g. during pre-sales, the sale or post-sales. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) Relevant and value-adding content helps engaging the customers, allows them to interact with the brand closely, delivering enhanced brand experiences and exceptional satisfaction. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Digital customer experience is formed through an effective combination of online content, features and services that a customer perceives relevant, useful and hence valuable to him, in which he willingly takes part. Furthermore, digital customer experience is shared online through communication and interaction, therefore customers can become important influencers and advocates for the product, brand or service, by passing on their positive experiences to a large audience. (Ryan, 2014) Digital marketing technologies, techniques and tools allow to provide targeted content and offer tailored customer experiences that increase customer satisfaction and engagement, and hence leading to customer loyalty. Through close interaction with customers and earned credibility, a brand can achieve and sustain trust. Moreover, customers today can be involved in the process of offer development together with the companies, which takes the customer experience

and brand engagement to a completely new level. As customers become co-creators of content, products, services and even systems, they become increasingly loyal to the brand while they help improving business processes, products and services (Chaffey and Smith, 2013). Creating a successful customer experience requires online credibility, unique value proposition, ongoing content creation and interaction, continuous research, feedback and optimization, as well as time and resource commitment. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, Charlesworth, 2014)

3.2 Digital marketing communication tools

Digital marketing communications take place in the electronic environment, where a large variety of electronic platforms and different types of online tools are used to generate relevant and valuable content, to provide an arena for communication, interaction and create user experiences, and allowing users to generate, and share digital content. These digital platforms are referred to as the *digital marketing communication tools (DMCT)*. In this chapter, the focus is placed on the content related digital communication tools, part of owned and earned media categories. First, the concept of content marketing is reviewed, thereafter the essential tools for digital marketing communication are presented and categorized. Mobile marketing tools and e-mail marketing are not reviewed here, because the primary focus of the study is on the internet based content, such as website and blog, and social media platforms.

3.2.1 Content marketing

Chaffey and Smith define content marketing as management of text, rich media, audio and video content through print and digital media aimed at engaging customers and prospects to meet business goals. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) Content marketing has seen a spectacular growth in the digital era due to practically inexistent entry barriers, low cost and cost efficiency and availability of digital platforms for publishing various forms of content. (Ryan, 2014) Effectively managed and distributed, content marketing offers many opportunities for business. Ideally, great and engaging content converts leads into sales. Digital content is a key part of online value proposition of a business and an integral part of a brand (Chaffey and Smith, 2013). Therefore, content should be outstand-

ing, unique and valuable, enabling customer service and supporting customer engagement. Hence, quality and engaging content creates value for the customers, and consequently, they want to share their experience in the social environment. As a result, great content provides more exposure and visibility, and increases brand awareness.

Content marketing needs a strategy and defined marketing goals. Smart Insights provide a framework for content mapping, the *Content Marketing Matrix* (Figure 2).

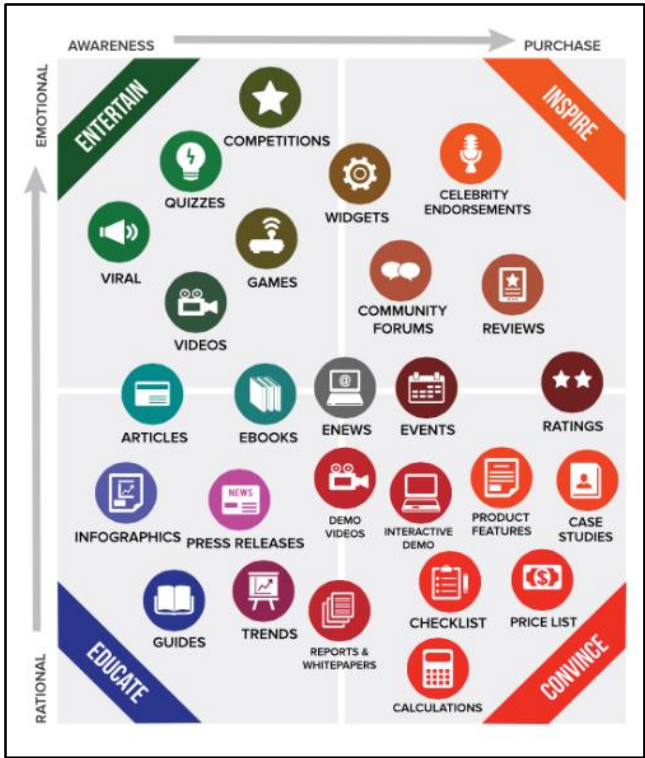


Figure 2. The Content Marketing Planning Matrix (2015). Source: SmartInsights.com

The content mapping tool includes four quadrants: entertain, inspire, educate and convince, and the following characteristics: emotional/rational and awareness/purchase. The content marketing planning matrix is a helpful tool for formulating and planning suitable content formats based on the marketing goals and aligning them with customer purchase intent and decision style (SmartInsight.com).

To enhance the relevance of content and enhance customer experiences, it is crucial to identify what kind of content adds value for the customers. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) The right content strategy that matches the intent and customer preferences is essential in creating customer value. For instance, committing to providing useful information on a regular basis, keeping the engagement with the customers fresh and relevant, or in-

vesting resources into creativity and publishing of engaging content. (Ryan, 2014). In order to meet the demand, marketers need to analyze demand by consumers for online services and respond to customers' needs. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013). It requires knowing the customer and understanding their needs, habits, behavior, patterns, preferences, requirements and other aspects in relation to the business or brand. For instance, according to Chaffey and Smith, notions of trust, control, time allocation and efficiency are important in both B2C and B2B contexts. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013). Today, with the help of internet technologies, companies can perform data mining and use sophisticated profiling techniques in order to discover and anticipate buyers' needs and interests. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013)

Content management is about consistency and integration throughout the digital media landscape that relates to company, product or brand. It is extremely important in digital marketing as the content needs to be updated and controlled on a regular basis to avoid out-of-date material online. (Charlesworth, 2014) It might require re-editing written texts, checking for the navigational links workability, or archiving or deleting old and irrelevant content. (Charlesworth, 2014) Moreover, Chaffey and Smith emphasize that any digital content posted online becomes global and can reach customers worldwide. It is particularly important to remember when building a brand concept and positioning a brand, because the brand becomes instantly international, and therefore brand related content should be international and deliver a global image and identity (Chaffey and Smith, 2013). Otherwise, the international sales might be compromised due to contradictory, confusing or offensive brand names, logos or images with negative connotations, associations or pronunciation. (Referenceforbusiness.com).

3.2.2 Website optimization and SEO

One of the key issues in effective web presence and quality content is a good website. Website remains an important tool in digital marketing communication, it is a presentation of a company or brand, an essential source of information, a point of contact for customers and a reference for all digital footprint. As Ryan portrays it, a company's website is its business card, a hub for digital communication, a "shop window" and the actual place of business, therefore it is incredibly valuable. (Ryan 2014) A good website

is an effective combination of many elements that a company can manage and control entirely. A website's function goes beyond displaying, as it can be considered a "conversion engine for traffic" (Ryan 2014, p.44), because an effective website is a key success factor for achieving conversion goals. According to Chaffey and Smith, key elements of an effective site design are function (accessibility), content (findability & SEO), form (usability), organization (architecture) and interaction (persuasion). (Chaffey and Smith 2013, p.283) Accessibility refers to the ease of access to the site for users, its functionality with web browsers, electronic devices and search engines, and legal requirements. Findability refers to the compliance and relevance of the site design, content, code and protocols with search engines, search robots and web standards, so that the site can be identified and displayed in various browsers. Architecture of the site has to do with structure and labelling of site content to facilitate navigation and on-site search for users. In form and usability characteristics, user-friendliness is key. Persuasion implies delivering conversions through content and customer experience, prioritizing most valuable content and facilitating customer journeys, for instance by using interactivity features and promotional techniques. (Chaffey and Smith 2013, p.284)

With technological advances, website has evolved into a dynamic, interactive, highly informative and customized resource, delivering unique features and online experiences. In order to succeed, customer-centric approach is becoming an imperative: the website has to appeal to the target market (Ryan, 2014, Chaffey and Smith, 2013). It requires identifying customer journey and producing relevant content to ensure that the website fulfils the needs of users and visitors, and provides an enjoyable flow of experience and efficiency of actions. (Bax et al., 2013, Chaffey and Smith, 2013, Ryan, 2014) A well-structured, enticing and user-friendly website is key to its success. Bax et al. suggest that sometimes "less" is in fact "more", as it is the case with Google.com, therefore one should be very careful with finding the right balance between style and content. (Bax et al., 2013) Ryan emphasizes that simple, elegant and functional design is effective. (Ryan 2014, p.47) It is crucial to build the website around relevant keywords and phrases and arranging them into a logical structure. (Ryan, 2014) Moreover, the authors warn about "using technology just for technology sake", meaning that not all available technologies are necessarily appropriate for every site. (Bax et al., 2013, p.32)

Bounce rates represent a significant challenge in digital marketing. Bounce rate refers to “drop offs”, or the percentage of visitors who leave the website after viewing only one page. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, SmartInsights.com) High bounce rates are signs of lack of engagement with the site. Any website is usually subject to bounce rates, but the major concern is when bouncing rates exceed the average range of 15-25% for home page, 35-55% for category/product page and 60-80% for a blog post. (Chaffey and Smith 2013, p.287) Web analytic tools and metrics are needed to analyze the problematic areas and improve the effectiveness and quality of landing pages and website content in general. (Chaffey and Smith 2013, SmartInsights.com) According to Smart Insights, website performance can be measured using Google Analytics or Doubleclick Adplanner measurement tools. (SmartInsights.com) To conduct a more in-depth analysis, it is worthwhile segmenting visitors into categories, e.g. new vs. returning visitors, entrance page, etc. (Chaffey and Smith 2013, SmartInsights.com) The analytical measurements provide an insight into the engagement capability of a site or a page, and help understanding customer experience. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013).

Search engine optimization or SEO methods are used to increase a website’s online visibility, drive traffic and quality visitors. According to Smart Insights, it is the most cost-effective digital marketing technique. A website’s visibility is defined by an effective search engine position and a high ranking in the search engines result pages. (Bax et al., 2013, SmartInsights.com) The ultimate objective of SEO is to be at the top of search engine listing from an enquiry (Bax et al. 2013, p.34) Ryan emphasizes that quality content determines the value given in search results for sites with better content (Ryan, 2014). It implies that a website with more structured, rich and accurate content gets a better ranking in the search engine results, making the site more visible. Ryan cites Google guidelines and recommendations: “Create a useful, information-rich site and write pages that clearly and accurately describe your content.” (Ryan 2014, p.300)

The website’s visibility is reached through high-ranking position in the natural or organic searches, i.e. results listed from a query according to the relevance of match between the keyword and the web page. (SmartInsight.com) SEO allows to increase the natural listing through a website technical analysis, outstanding content creation, keyword and keyphrase analysis, Google and Microsoft algorithms, HTML code (title, meta data,

header tags, markup, body and external and internal links), and other technical aspects (SmartInsights.com, Chaffey and Smith, 2013, Ryan, 2014). Moreover, search engines provide own guidelines, tips and resources for website analysis and optimization, for instance, Google Webmaster Central, Google Webmaster Tools, Google AdWords, Wordtracker. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, Ryan, 2014) Ryan suggests that analyzing competitors' websites can provide useful information on effective keywords and keyphrases that drive traffic, for which SEO Toolset and Compete.com services can be valuable. (Ryan, 2014) Since search engine requires very specific technical knowledge, it is advisable to hire experts in the field to perform website and search engine optimization. Nevertheless, it is important to have an understanding of the basic aim and purpose of website optimization to include it in the company's digital marketing strategy.

3.2.3 Social media marketing

Social media refers to internet and mobile-based social networking platforms build on the foundations of web 2.0 that allow users to produce, consume and exchange information, socialize and interact with each other, share opinions and content, it involves building of communities or networks and encourages participation, engagement and content creation. (CIPR 2011, cited by Chaffey 2013, p.214, Charlesworth, 2014, p.292) User-generated content is a fundamental aspect of social media marketing. Furthermore, viral marketing is feature of social media marketing, serving as "word-of-mouth", "buzz" and referrals, as customers pass on the messages to peers, spread the word around networks and invite other users to take part in commenting, discussing or sharing content or links. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) Viral marketing can be thus viewed as a promotional mechanism that builds traffic (Bax et al, 2014). A company can use viral marketing tactics to its advantage by encouraging users to share information, spreading interesting ideas and images, clever or creative messages, special offers, announcements or invitations (Chaffey and Smith 2013, p.122). As the concept of word-of-mouth is dual, it involves both positive and negative aspects, the challenge for marketers is to manage and capitalize on the positive aspect of word-of-mouth. (Bax et al., 2013)

Social media is currently one of the most important toolkits existing in digital marketing communications. According to Bax et al., many businesses are using social media as a

core part of their marketing activities. (Bax et al, 2013) Dunant emphasizes that social media tools are used by businesses as a means of achieving marketing objectives, communicating new products, special offers and sales, building customer loyalty and providing real time customer service. (Dunant, 2014) Today, 92% of marketers consider social media of high value and importance to their business, and wish to master effective social tactics and audience engagement in social media. (Social Media Marketing Industry Report on SocialMediaExaminer.com)

Charlesworth suggests that some elements of social media marketing can be viewed as part of a relationship approach to marketing, where an organization can build and develop a relationship with its customers. (Charlesworth, 2014) The relationship element is often referred to as *social CRM*. Social CRM is usually a collaborative strategy integrated across the customer lifecycle and value chain, however, the principles of CRM can be implemented in different functions, such as sales, customer service, innovation, collaboration and customer experience. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) According to the author, social media refers to the social environment where individuals estimate the benefits of any possible relationship against the efforts/costs put into it to and whether the relationship should be pursued or terminated. (Charlesworth, 2014)

3.2.4 Classification of social media platforms

Using a technical language, digital marketing communication tools are social media platforms used for online interaction among users. Social media platforms are extremely popular and widely used on the internet, as there are literally millions of users connecting to social networks daily. Anybody can name Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. Recent research data provided by Social Media Examiner shows that Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn networks are the top three leading digital marketing communication tools used by marketers in 2014 and have remained in the same positions since 2012. Facebook is the absolute global leader for many years in a row (Social Media Marketing Industry Report). Following the leaders, YouTube and blogs make up the top five social media tools in 2014. Other types of popular social media platforms such as Google+ and Pinterest are growing steadily, but show much lower usage percentages. (Social Media Marketing Industry Report) The social media trend is not solely specific to the Western

countries. Currently, the Asia Pacific countries represent around 52% of social media users worldwide. Active users of Facebook in Asia account for overwhelming 426 million people monthly, whereas one-third of Twitter worldwide users come from Asia. In India, for instance, Facebook, Google+ and Twitter are the leading social platforms. (Adweek.com, Go-globe.com)

Social media platforms vary in their characteristics, content, purpose and user profiles; therefore, it is useful to categorize them according to their type to get a better understanding. Social media arena is overwhelmingly wide and numerous social media classifications can be found in literature and online. The reason why so many classifications exist, according to Ryan, is simply because most social media platforms incorporate many features and components that do not fall under one precise category. (Ryan, 2014) Hereafter is a classification of social platforms by Dave Chaffey (2012), who has identified ten main types, based on their primary function:

- Social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+)
- Social publishing and news: newspapers, communities (Tumblr, Pinterest)
- Social commenting in blogs: company blogs
- Social niche communities (TripAdvisor, Trustpilot, Yelp)
- Social customer service: service and support communities (Get Satisfaction)
- Social knowledge: reference (Wikipedia, Yahoo! Answers, SlideShare, Quora)
- Social bookmarking (Reddit, StumbleUpon, Digg, Delicious)
- Social streaming: photos, videos (YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, Pinterest, Vimeo)
- Social search: tags, comments, voting (Google+1)
- Social commerce: retail sector reviews, ratings, deals.

(Chaffey and Smith 2013, p.215-216)

The choice and availability of online social platforms is spectacular, therefore it is important to identify priorities in terms of online tools for gaining visibility and driving customer acquisition for a business. (Dave Chaffey, SmartInsights.com) Hereafter are two perspectives on the social media landscape categorization by two prominent digital marketing authors. Brian Solis, a well-known figure in digital marketing and analytics, developed the *Conversation Prism* (v 1.0) in 2008, a visual tool for strategists that

helped to organize the emerging social media landscape and brought an unprecedented perspective to the social media ecosystem. (ConversationPrism.com) In 2013, a new version 4.0 of the Conversation Prism was released (Appendix 2), showing an expanded and changed social media landscape. It introduces new categories and narrows down the focus on mainstream, dominating and promising social networks, as well as organizes networks by context and intention. (ConversationPrism.com).

In 2010, Dave Chaffey, a digital marketing author and consultant, developed a Social Media Marketing Radar tool (SMMR) for prioritizing online presence, finding best traction channels and reviewing options for online customer acquisition. (Dave Chaffey, SmartInsights.com) When explaining why the Radar was developed, Chaffey referred to the Conversation Prism by Brian Solis: “I’ve always thought that the Conversation Prism developed by Brian Solis several years ago now was a great way of thinking through your options for making use of and monitoring social media”. (SmartInsights.com) In 2015, a new and updated version of SMMR, a *Digital Marketing Radar* was introduced, also called a *Marketing Bullseye Framework* (Figure 3).

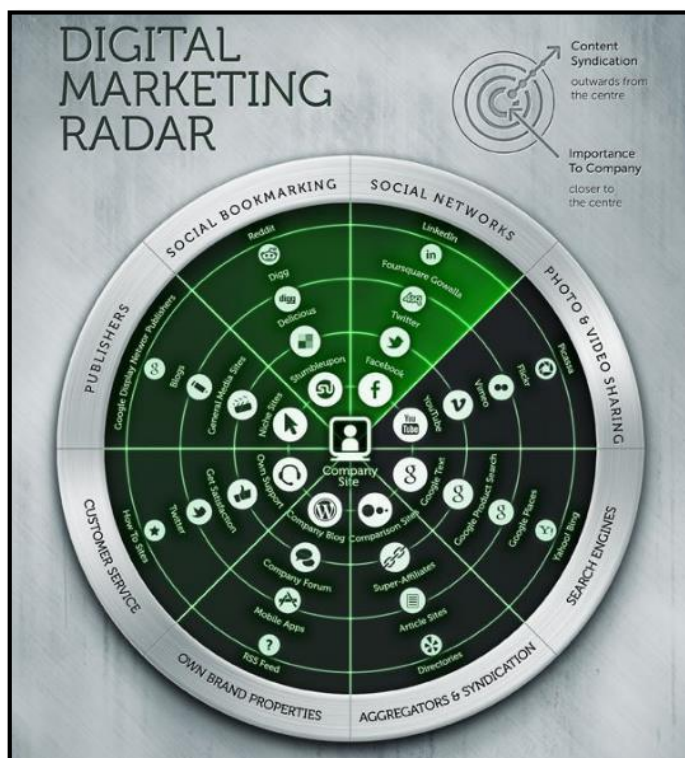


Figure 3. Digital Marketing Radar (2015). Source: SmartInsights.com.

When comparing the Digital Marketing Radar to the Conversation Prism, the author considers the Radar to be more applicable to overall digital marketing strategy, because it is simpler, provides more visual distinction, it has a broader scope, it shows options for increasing brand awareness, and it helps prioritization in different categories (SmartInsights.com). The Digital Marketing Radar is a useful framework that considers not only the biggest communication platforms, but helps to identify and evaluate different categories of tools and other social sites and targeted communities (SmartInsights.com). It allows to focus attention and resources of the company on what is considered more important, hence concentrated towards the centre of the radar. (Bosomworth, SmartInsights.com) Moreover, the author of the Radar emphasizes that going beyond the main networks can result in finding more passionate audiences who are more willing to engage and share. (Bosomworth, SmartInsights.com) The author considers that niche or vertical communities provide more opportunities for brands. Although big networks, like Facebook, remain important, it might be easier to build presence in niche communities, gain interest and traction for the brand, and earn influence of a community. (Bosomworth, SmartInsights.com)

3.2.5 Main social platforms

This chapter reviews the social media communication tools of primary importance and priority for Salusfin. The most relevant platforms and their main features are presented hereafter by category, based on the Digital Marketing Radar (2015) and the social media classification (2012) by Dave Chaffey, and input from Conversation Prism by Solis (2014). The main social media categories are: 1) social networks, 2) social sharing, and 3) social customer service. The promising social media categories, such as social blogging (4), social bookmarking (5) and social rating (6) are presented as well, because they represent a great potential for business and these tools are definitely worth considering. The main social media categories and platforms for Salusfin are the following:

1. Social networking:

Social media platforms and sites, also called social networking services or social utilities that allow users to create a user profile, connect with people and build groups of “friends” by adding other users with whom different types of content can be shared

(messages, status updates, photos, articles, videos, comments, information, etc.). The platforms have built-in notifications, news feeds, posting and sharing options.

Facebook: world's leading social network platform that allows to find and connect with friends, new and old acquaintances, colleagues, and family, and categorize "friends" into lists. Users can manage their own accounts, get notifications, suggestions, join common-interest user groups, based on different characteristics. Information or content can be posted and made available to all or chosen "friends", as the sender is able to set the sharing option limits himself. Users can express appreciation of content by clicking the "like" button, they can comment and share posts and content, use hashtags to find interesting posts or topics. Users can follow different pages and receive news feeds based on individual subscriptions, connections and activity. Facebook offers opportunities for businesses. "Meet the people who'll love your business" (Facebook.com). Facebook marketing (paid form) enables business to reach and engage customer audience, boost online presence, raise brand awareness, track actions and measure performance and as a result, drive or increase online sales. (Facebook.com) According to a recent research conducted by Technorati Media in 2013, consumers follow brands on Facebook to learn about products and services (56%), keep-up with brand-related activities (52%), promotions (48%) and to provide feedback (32%). (Charlesworth 2014, p.307) Nevertheless, Facebook marketing is losing its positions especially in B2B, as marketers no longer consider Facebook as effective a tool, but Facebook presence is still very important for companies. (SocialMediaExaminer.com)

Twitter: a popular social network service that allows to "connect with people, express yourself and discover what's happening" (Twitter.com). The platform enables users to share ideas and information instantly. Registered users can post and read short messages or "tweets" that contain 140 characters. Tweets are available for reading to unregistered users too. Besides text, tweets can be images or videos. Twitter has its own specific "lingo": "compose" means writing a tweet, posting a photo or sharing a video, "reply" is used for commenting tweets and conversations, "retweet" is for sharing the tweets with followers with/without own comments, "favorite" is to inform the author that you like his/her tweet, an analog to Facebook's "like". Twitter introduced "hashtags" or "#" to assign a topic to a tweet, to group tweets, and serve as a link to other tweets on the same topic. The "@" sign followed by a username is used in mentions and replies. The platform allows users to add and follow content, monitor and comment conversations. The

registered user can subscribe to other users' tweets and become "followers" of people, pages, companies or brands. Users can manage content in their timeline to show topics, people and news interesting to them. Twitter provides an opportunity to grow business by creating and managing Twitter presence, sharing information, growing a follower base, generating user interaction, gathering real-time market intelligence, finding leads, driving website traffic and building relationships with customers, partners and influencers. (Twitter.com) Twitter Ads is a form of paid advertisement on Twitter for reaching potential customers, gaining followers by promoting brand account, measure results and track growth in real time. (Twitter.com) Based on research results by Technorati Media in 2013, Twitter users like to keep up with brand activities (57%), learn about products and services (47%) and providing feedback (27%). (Charlesworth 2014, p.307)

LinkedIn: the largest professional and business-oriented social network, with a slogan "Relationships matter". The platform requires user registration and provides options for free or paid memberships with premium functions. Users create profiles, establish their professional identity by displaying their CV's, personal data, photos and other relevant professional achievements and add "connections" to their professional relationship circle, i.e. co-workers, employees, managers, partners, customers etc. There is a job search option that allows users to search for job opportunities, bookmark jobs and apply for jobs, whereas companies can post job offerings and look for potential candidates. Users can follow different brands or companies and receive updates, notifications, offers and news feeds. Users can receive recommendations to connections and get information on profile visitors. The matter of trust is a working principle, as contact with professionals requires direct relationship or other connections. (Wikipedia) LinkedIn provides solutions for small businesses to find the right people, connect with a broad range of contacts, establish and expand a network, find and join groups, drive new business relationships, stay in touch and follow up with important connections, build brand reputation through a strong and optimized profile, engaging and quality content, e.g. regular updates, posts, active dialogues, create buzz through sharing, recommendations and referrals, follow other companies, relevant channels and influencers, keep track of visitors, and also find and hire right talents with the recruiting tools. (Linkedin.com)

Google+: launched in 2011, this social networking tool is growing in importance, however it is not yet well managed by most marketers (Social Media Examiner). Accounting for 540 million active users monthly in 2013, Google+ quickly became the third largest

social network. (The Social Media Hat) Google+ allows registered users to create and customize profiles with information and photos, create and organize “circles” of people, enables users to read the updates and posts of people in the circle, find and meet people that share same interests or get suggestions, they can join communities, follow “hot” topics and discussions, create and share posts and messages with attached pictures, photos, or links, plan events, send invitations to chosen contacts, store and access photos and other content from events, as well as add, organize, store and share photos. Hashtag serves to get trending and recent search results. (plus.google.com) The uniqueness of Google platform is that one user profile is automatically attached to other Google services and built-in apps, such as YouTube, Gmail, Google Maps, Google Docs or Hangouts with free video conferencing calls. (Wikipedia) Google’s “+1 button” is an option for recommendation, similar to Facebook’s “like”. For business purposes, Google provides “Google+ Pages” and “Google My Business”. “Google+ Pages” enable companies to connect with fans through “Pages” profile and users can follow company pages. (Wikipedia) “Google My Business”: is a service that helps build relationships, have conversations and acquire a loyal fan base, it is a place where customers can like, recommend, rate, review, post and share content across the web. It connects business with customers by putting company info on search, Google Maps and Google+ for the customers to find and get in touch with the company quickly, easily and accurately. (google.com/my business) The slogan summarizes its main purpose “Finding your people. Get your business on Google for free”. (google.com/my business)

2. Social sharing:

Image and audio-visual content hosting services allow posting, sharing, commenting. Video marketing has been rapidly growing in recent years to become an absolute must in digital marketing communications.

YouTube: created in 2005, it is now the most popular video-sharing platform in the world. YouTube platform has reached 1 billion user limit in 2013 (TheSocialMediaHat) The official statement summarizes its purpose and main features: “YouTube allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small.” (youtube.com) The platform works for both unregistered and registered users, but regis-

tration provides more options, such as uploading, commenting and sharing, and customization function. Private individual and large businesses have used YouTube to grow audiences. (Wikipedia) An interesting fact about YouTube is that it features a different April Fools' Day prank on 1st of April every year since 2008. (Wikipedia) The results of research by Technorati Media in 2013, show that YouTube users engage with brands to learn about products and services (61%), keep up with brand related activities (41%) and provide feedback (23%). (Charlesworth 2014, p.307)

Instagram: online photo/video sharing, and social networking service, a global community of more than 300 million people who share more than 60 million photos every day. (Instagram.com) Its slogan states: "Capture and share the world's moments." As Instagram describes it on its website: "It's a fast, beautiful and fun way to share your life in pictures with friends and family." (Instagram.com) The service enables users to create web profiles, to take pictures and videos and share them on other platforms, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr. (Wikipedia) Instagram has become the home for visual storytelling for everyone from celebrities, newsrooms and brands, to teens, musicians and anyone with a creative passion. (Instagram) Its distinctive features include a picture/video taking option, photographic filter tools to transform and edit photos before posting them, geotags with geographical location coordinates, and connection to other social networks. The "explore tab" facilitates search for users or hashtags, and provides chosen photos to fit a user's interests and connections. (Wikipedia)

Pinterest: web hosting service for visual discovery, collection and storage, enables photo storing and sharing, and requires registration. The platform has been launched five years ago and accounted for 70 million users in 2013. (TheSocialMediaHat) Pinterest allows users to "discover and save creative ideas from around the web with one click" (Pinterest.com) Pinterest is a personalized platform where users can upload, search, save and manage images or "pins" and other media content, such as videos, and arrange them into "pinboards". (Wikipedia) Users can pin items, create boards, browse through other pins and boards and "repin" its content, and interact with other members. (Wikipedia) Additionally, Pinterest customizes user's homepage to display personalized results based on user's interests. (Wikipedia) Businesses can create pages to promote their companies and products online, include data, information and even prices, serving as a "virtual storefront" for a company. (Wikipedia) According to Salesforce, Pinterest has become a key part of corporate digital marketing strategies, and driving sales more ef-

fectively than other forms of social media. (Wikipedia) A tool called “Rich Pin” is available for companies to enhance the customer experience, it allows to add extra details to the Pins, including extra information, such as app, movie, map, product or article. (Pinterest for Business, on business.pinterest.com) Pinterest Analytics allows to keep track and evaluate Pin profile and website performance. (business.pinterest.com)

3. Social customer service:

Online quality service and expertise operations that a company provides to its customer to advise, support, help and deal with any questions related to company, product, brand or services. Social customer service has to be adapted to the needs of social media and its audience: it is an interactive communication process, a dialogue that takes place between the company/brand and its customers, usually initiated by the customer. It represents an excellent opportunity for the company to deliver value, satisfaction and add-on benefits to the customer, provide positive customer experiences, influence and reinforce a positive brand perception. Social customer service has to be timely, accurate, value adding and efficient. According to Conversocial, the social customer service has three stages of evolution: 1) a simple marketing and publishing function in social media, redirecting customers to traditional service channels, 2) early adoption of social customer service, with a small team of social agents that help customers through engagement, and 3) a customer service channels with a fully-resourced contact center with integrated processes, technology and analytics. (Conversocial) For technical products, the author suggests to follow the early adoption stage model of customer service, as a team of experts and technical support is a must. Strong social and interpersonal skills are crucial for customer service, even more so in a social media context.

Own support site: having a support team, a helpdesk and own software solution, ideally integrating Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms with company’s helpdesk to be able to monitor the inquiries, complaints and discussions and react to them timely and directly. An online chat is a useful and efficient tool.

Customer service application: an innovative solution to serve customers effectively, provide superior customer experience, enables direct reach, quick response and solution.

Social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn are important tools for customer service, requires multi-channel monitoring and management.

Get Satisfaction: customer community platform for delivering technical and customer support through customer interaction and engagement, with embedding and configuring options and management tools.

Other promising and growing social media categories and tools are:

4. Social blogging:

Blogging is an easy to use, flexible and powerful digital communication tool aiming at sharing true values and innovation with the world through personal publishing. (Bax et al., 2013) Blogs have become powerful influential tools, producing opinion leaders and attracting early adopters. Corporate blogging has increased significantly and is continuing to grow as a valuable communication tool. (Bax et al., 2013) Blogging is becoming crucial for small business, as blogs offer an opportunity to make even “boring” industries communicate brand values and promises efficiently, and create unique enticing content that drives traffic. Blogs are easy to set up and many tools are free of charge or have minimal cost. Chaffey and Smith maintain that blog-generated content can provide necessary exposure, boost visibility for the company on social networks and increase the search engine rankings. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) As the variety of blogs is growing, blogs comprising videos or vlogs, and photoblogs with photographs, are becoming more common and are more interesting to viewers. Corporate blogs, when managed well, can provide useful, meaningful and interesting content, according to Chaffey and Smith (2013). However, many businesses abandon blogging due to lack of time and skills. (Dunant 2014, p.91) The latest Social Media Marketing Industry Report reveals that blogging holds the top spot for future growth plans and investments for 68% of marketers (Social Media Examiner)

Company’s own blog: Chaffey and Smith suggest to publish brand related, regular, meaningful and on-topic posts, act in a natural and human way, follow a publication schedule, include calls-to-actions for the customers, such as polls, ratings or surveys, encourage participation by inviting to comment or to give feedback, posting useful links, e.g. website or forum pages, invite readers to subscribe and receive latest news and updates. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013)

WordPress: a free blog tool, a publishing platform and a content management system. This platform is widely used to create websites, but has become a popular blogging software, used in over 60 million websites (Wikipedia). WordPress is completely cus-

tomizable, and users can choose thousands of plugins, widgets and themes. (wordpress.org) WordPress is also a hosting service that allows users to get started with WordPress-based blog in a matter of seconds, provides resources like forums and mailing lists (wordpress.org) The platform has integrated link management, search engine friendly structures and provides other structural features and standards which makes it recognizable in web publishing. (Wikipedia, wordpress.org).

Blogger: blog publishing and hosting service, Google's publishing tool for sharing text, photos and video. Uses Google+ profile or a pseudonym for identity, allows to connect with readers, who can share and recommend brand content on the web and on Google+ (blogger.com). User can create and edit own blogs, share posts, photos or links, and follow other blogs in the "reading list". Blogger users can choose from various templates and customize them. (Wikipedia) Google Toolbar has an integrated feature "BlogThis!" that allows Blogger users to post links directly to their blogs. (Wikipedia) Blogger has some limitations on content storage and technical aspects. User accounts are limited to 100 blogs, but there is no limitation in the number of posts. (Wikipedia)

RSS feeds: RSS stands for "rich site summary" and uses web feed formats to publish new web content updates, such as blog entries, news headlines, alerts, audio and video (Wikipedia). RSS feeds allow to syndicate content, manage and customize feeds. (www.rss.com) It allows to stay informed, save time and ensure privacy. (www.whatisrss.com) A popular way to access content is via a feed reader application, but feeds can be also delivered to email. (Wikipedia)

5. Social bookmarking:

Social bookmarking follows the concept of adding a page to "favorite bookmarks" in the browser, but involves more options. (Ryan, 2014) The bookmarking platforms, or social media submission sites, allow users to tag and share content, save bookmarks to favorite web resources, categorize tags and labels, make comments and have discussions, and share them online. (Ryan, 2014) The content is actively submitted and shared with online community for rating or "voting" with the aim of achieving higher rankings and visibility by appearing on the site's homepage. The visibility and the content achieved through rankings and discussions ultimately result in driving traffic to the ranked site. (Ryan, 2014) According to Ryan, social bookmarking platforms provide valuable information about consumers and offer insights into consumers' minds, what

they find compelling, popular and appealing, and why. In turn, companies have to contribute equally to brand building and establishment of reputation and trust by being involved in discussions and posting relevant and interesting content. (Ryan, 2014) Having a beneficial brand perception in the community, the platform represents an effective tool for increasing online presence and boosting traffic.

Reddit: the largest entertainment, social networking and news website for registered members to submit and organize content and vote on text posts and links. (Wikipedia) 174 million registered users in 2014. (Wikipedia)

StumbleUpon: “A giant collection of the best pages on the internet. Connecting people to great content” (www.stumbleupon.com), bookmarking web service that finds and recommends suited web content, including web pages, photos and videos, to its registered users. About 30 million registered users (TheSocialMediaHat).

Delicious: “Discover, share, and organize the hottest links online”, a web service for storing, sharing, and discovering web bookmarks. (www.delicious.com)

Digg: “Digg delivers the most interesting and talked about stories on the Internet right now” (www.digg.com), a news aggregator with optional registration, can share content with other social platforms, like Facebook or Twitter. (Wikipedia)

6. Social rating:

In social rating platforms, web users are encouraged to write comments and own experiences about products and services, that are made public and can reach very large audience. (Charlesworth, 2014) There are many benefits from online review publishing. For instance, reviews can be used as additional content to attract visitors to the website, or customer feedback can be part of the product presentation for service providing sites. (Charlesworth, 2014) A website can also provide a built-in rating, recommendation or approval function for the product or service, for instance an image of thumbs or stars or any other images that associate with the website to reinforce personalization. (Charlesworth, 2014) An overwhelming benefit of writing a review is that user-submitted reviews are often well informed and trusted by others. (Charlesworth, 2014)

Yelp Inc.: web-based urban guide and social networking site, publishing user reviews and crowd-sourced recommendations about local businesses, with pages providing local information. (Wikipedia) Yelp is “the best way to find great local businesses” (yelp.com) The platform gives ratings, provides user reviews on different businesses,

and has discussion arenas in a local language. Businesses can add listing information and special deals (Wikipedia). Yelp Inc. provides training services on responsible response to reviews to small businesses and hosts social events for reviewers. (Wikipedia) **Trustpilot**: online consumer review driven platform for e-businesses. Users are invited to share their online shopping experiences and ratings, so that customers can make smarter and more informed purchasing decisions. As Trustpilot summarizes, they are “serious about bringing consumers and companies together”. The platform allows companies to collect reviews, get direct feedback from the customers and build on credibility, popularity and transparency. (trustpilot.com)

3.2.6 Managing digital marketing

Social listening is a relatively recent concept referring to the process of following and monitoring conversations in social media. The purpose of social listening is to provide an understanding of the market, customers and needs. Social media is an excellent tool for marketers for monitoring customer preferences, customer experiences, good and bad, latest trends, competitors, partners, brand mentions, company reputation. It helps getting ideas for content improvement, campaigns, product and service development, and identify “influencers” or sales opportunities. (Bax et al., 2013, Dunant, 2014, Chaffey and Smith, 2013) Social listening can be done in the form of social monitoring, social research or feedback. Social monitoring refers to tracking and dealing with PR, brand protection, and customer service. Social research is a strategic analysis of conversation topics, branding and other experiences with a strategic purpose of improvement and development of product, service or campaign. While feedback refers to providing customer with feedback tools to listen to them. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) Social listening uses keywords to specify conversations. Chaffey and Smith suggest three essential keyphrases for social listening, which are brand conversations (brand name and sub-brands), competitor conversations (competitor brands) and market conversations (products and services). (Chaffey and Smith 2013, p. 237) Furthermore, there are specific tools to improve social listening: free search engines, e.g. Google Alerts, Google Realtime or Google Discussion, or specialist monitoring and analytical tools, such as Social Mention, or UserVoice. (Chaffey and Smith 2013, p.237) Social listening implies response and adequate reaction from the company, whether it is responding to feedback

or being active participant in conversations. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) Dunant (2014) suggests to use effective tools for managing, monitoring and measuring social media, for instance, Tagboard, Commun.it, Klout. Dunant recommends to apply helpful distribution automation tools like BufferApp, Social Network Auto poster or Zapier to deliver content to social media and save time. However, one should be careful with too much automation, because human approach is valuable in social media. (Dunant, 2014)

Social media *optimization* activities are another way to manage social media effectively. Shareable content is today a key success factor. To ensure that the content is shareable, a few steps can be undertaken. For instance, paying attention to the usage of popular terms that encourage sharing, such as “most”, “best”, or “how” that refer to help and guidance, and avoiding turn-off terms like “poll”, “review” and “vs”. A few recommendations for digital marketing optimization include: make sharing, tagging and bookmarking easy with the help of plug-ins, share buttons and badges; encourage re-use of content with RSS feeds, email newsletters, status updates, social bookmarks and tweets; share proactively by syndicating articles to other partners and platforms; encourage interaction by sharing comments, experiences and content from own website on a social network with the help of LiveCycle or Facebook Connect; reward engagement with promotional or content offer; encourage the “mashup” i.e. remixing content with own to make it user-generated content; integrate sharing into different platforms, web, mobile and email tools; and especially focus on platform accessibility for mobile devices, as the mobile market is growing abundantly. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013)

3.3 Strategic digital marketing planning

3.3.1 Digital marketing strategy

It is difficult, if not impossible, to make the right decisions and undertake the right actions without a proper plan or a strategy. It is not enough knowing that digital marketing has a great potential with a wide range of available tools, and that by using these tools, a company can achieve online success. Recent research data shows that 46% of organizations do not have a digital marketing plan or strategy, and according to Dave Chaffey,

they are missing opportunities and encounter challenges. (SmartInsights.com) Therefore, the use of digital marketing tools has to be structured and well planned to be effective, and having a set of priorities, goals and a roadmap of planned activities will support digital marketing efforts. Moreover, the online context is very competitive and therefore the need for good planning and a clear marketing strategy is vital for a company to stay competitive. Ryan emphasizes that a well-formulated and coherent digital marketing strategy is necessary for achieving business goals, making the right decisions and focusing on the right elements (Ryan, 2014). Chaffey and Smith highlight that a digital marketing strategy implies the use of digital marketing tools according to a well-defined strategy with the purpose of reaching the company's objectives. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) An effective digital marketing strategy helps to filter out and prioritize the most important and relevant marketing tools. (Bax et al., 2013) Hence, a successful digital marketing strategy defines how the digital communication tools can be used and applied effectively for digital communications. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013)

According to Smart Insights, a strategy for digital marketing has to be clear, integrated and reviewed regularly on a daily, weekly and monthly basis (SmartInsights.com). Chaffey evaluates that a digital marketing strategy is needed to set clear strategic goals, allocate resources, know about customer demand and customers, estimate and gain an online market share, and offer a powerful online proposition. Moreover, digital marketing, when integrated into traditional media and communication channels, has a better focus and priorities, is dynamic and agile in engaging the audience, and finally, allows to review actions, make improvements and optimization. (SmartInsights.com) In order to formulate an effective strategy, planning tools are needed. The following chapter examines the fundamental strategic models for digital marketing planning, and Chapter 3.3.3 presents the newest strategic planning tool for digital marketing in detail.

3.3.2 SOSTAC® and RACE strategic models

A digital plan is needed to support a digital orientation of an organization, and most importantly to align its goals, strategies and tactics. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, SmartInsights.com) Useful tools for structuring the online marketing strategy are *SOSTAC®* and *RACE* frameworks. *SOSTAC®* model was developed by Paul Russell Smith in the

1990's. (Prsmith.org) *RACE* framework, also referred to as *RACE Planning System*, was created in 2012 by Dave Chaffey at Smart Insights.

The SOSTAC® model by PR Smith (*Figure 4*) is a logical, systematic and widely used tool for strategic marketing planning. (www.smartinsights.com) It is a planning system for developing and managing marketing strategies, creating marketing plans and campaigns. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) SOSTAC® framework is particularly applicable to the digital marketing context, as it helps to evaluate, structure and manage the key strategies, tactics and actions of a company combined with digital marketing communication techniques. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, SmartInsights.com)



Figure 4. SOSTAC® Planning Framework (2011). Source: Nowastemarketing.nl

SOSTAC® acronym stands for Situation, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action and Control steps (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, p.3). The main planning stages for a digital marketing strategy are the following:

- S = Situation analysis “Where are we now?”
- O = Objectives “Where do we want to be?”
- S = Strategy “How do we get there?”
- T = Tactics “How exactly do we get there? Details and tools”
- A = Actions “What is the plan? Who is going to do what and when? Processes and systems”
- C = Control “Did we get there? How do we monitor and measure the process? Metrics”

Additionally, a plan needs three key resources, referred to as 3M's, which are human resources, budgets and timescales. (Chaffey and Smith 2013, prsmith.org)

The *RACE Planning System* helps to develop a digital marketing strategy with a focus on customer-centric content marketing, with the purpose of reaching and engaging customers to meet business objectives (Chaffey and Smith 2013). RACE acronym stands for Reach, Act, Convert and Engage (*Figure 5*).



Figure 5. RACE Digital Marketing Planning Framework (2012) by Smart Insights.

The RACE framework consists of four steps. The preliminary step “Plan” is omitted from the framework, because it involves fundamental marketing planning activities to support the strategic goals, such as customer research, segmentation, positioning, development of value proposition. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013) The first step “Reach” refers to increasing the reach of digital content through online presence, building brand awareness of a brand, products/services by driving traffic to websites, blogs or social media sites. The second step “Act” is about encouraging interaction and participation, getting prospects interested and encouraging communication within own blogs, own website and social networks through relevant content and value proposition. The following “Convert” step means persuading the user to commit to a relationship with the company/brand, become a customer, achieve conversion and deliver on goals, such as sales, fans or leads generation. The last step “Engage” is to retain and make a customer loyal by developing a deeper relationship through time and ongoing communication, encouraging advocacy, recommendations and word-of-mouth. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013)

3.3.3 Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel Framework

The *Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel* framework (Figure 6) introduced in 2015 by Smart Insights, is the newest tool available for planning an integrated digital marketing strategy. It combines the SOSTAC® model by PR Smith, and the RACE Planning System by Smart Insights in one framework. The tool includes key activities that help planning, managing and optimizing multichannel marketing. The Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel (MMGW) provides a structured framework for producing an integrated digital marketing plan, by applying the SOSTAC® and RACE models to digital marketing tools. The framework is focused on achieving business value through customer interactions, and shows broader goals in the RACE lifecycle. (Dave Chaffey, SmartInsights.com)



Figure 6. Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel (2015). Source: SmartInsights.com

The MMGW framework incorporates a slightly modified SOSTAC® model with reduced steps, combining tactics and actions into one phase, and making the practical im-

plementation part shorter and more focused. The planning steps and main elements of SOSTAC® model for each phase need to be reviewed in detail. The first stage is situation analysis. It is an overview of the company, both internally within the organization and externally in the business environment. It involves assessing current situation of a brand, setting commercial goals, performing a SWOT analysis (demand, market trends and market opportunities), a competitor and intermediary analysis, a customer analysis, and defining a customer insight – who are the digital customers, focusing on “who, why and how” (demographic breakdown, interaction patterns, platforms used), assessing the digital tool landscape and performance of each tool. Analyzing the digital audience helps in targeting and creating the right online value proposition. For instance, a customer persona profiling can be done to get the following information: male/female, age, location, purchase history, mode of purchase, route of purchase, frequency. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, SmartInsights.com)

The second step of the planning framework is objectives. This stage determines realistic and measurable objectives for digital marketing, determining the reasons, purpose and the benefits of digital marketing and evaluating so-called “5 S” objectives, which are sell, serve, sizzle, speak, save. “Sell” objective focuses on growing sales through customer acquisition and retention targets. “Serve” objective defines customer satisfaction targets and what gives value to customers, e.g. service or extra benefits online. “Speak” is about engaging customers, getting closer by tracking, talking, interacting monitoring, listening and responding. “Save” refers to quantified efficiency gains, cutting prices and saving costs, finding more efficient and more effective cost reducing opportunities in sales, transactions, administration, customer support and other costs. “Sizzle” objective is the “wow” factor, added value deliverable online and extended brand experiences. All of the “5S” objectives have to be measurable, therefore each of the objective should be a SMART objective. SMART refers to Specific (with focus), Measurable (performance assessment, qualitative/quantitative analysis), Actionable (assisting in improving performance), Relevant (digital marketing domain), and Time-related (specific time period). Smart objectives can be for instance lead generation, reach, acquisition, engagement, conversion or retention. Goal performance and key performance indicators (KPI’s) have to be set. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, SmartInsights.com)

The third step is strategy, it involves determining target markets, customer segments, positioning, marketing mix (7P's), multichannel experience, engagement and content strategy and contact strategy. Strategy is planning and defining how the objectives can be achieved. Identifying a company's strengths from the SWOT analysis, aligning them with the company's goals and matching them with the available resources helps developing a realistic strategy. A tool to align strategy and objectives can be used to make sure that strategy supports objectives. (Chaffey and Smith, 2013, SmartInsights.com)

The phase of tactics and action defines the details of digital strategy, the digital tools of the digital mix, including the digital roadmap, 90-day plans, media schedule, editorial calendar and resource allocation. Marketing tactics involves the details of SEO (e.g. keyword analysis, webpage optimization, content and link building) or social media strategy in details, with key performance indicators for each tactic. The action step employs the tactics and takes actionable measures. Finally, the control section monitors the performance based on the objectives in terms of people (engagement), processes (regular review), tools (reporting platforms), feedback and prioritized actions. The tactics and KPI's from the previous section are used to set up a weekly or monthly monitoring dashboards to make sure that the objectives are met. Internal communication within the team or a company is important to ensure process management. (SmartInsights.com)

The RACE framework, as mentioned earlier, is embedded into the MMGW model and is situated at the centre of the wheel. RACE or Reach-Act-Convert-Engage cycle is focused on achieving defined targets in digital marketing with the help of SOSTAC® model steps. In other words, the ultimate goal at the heart of the Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel is achieving broader corporate and strategic goals. The key steps for a digital strategy to achieve online growth are:

- *Reaching*: segmentation and targeting, publishing and promoting content to customers and prospects, getting visitors, acquiring followers and fans through search engines, social networks, publishers, blogs, online PR, affiliate and partner marketing (KPI: unique visitors, value per visit, fans/followers)
- *Acting*: brand positioning and online value proposition, achieving interaction, getting shares and creating leads through enjoyable and clear customer journeys and relevant, inspirational and useful content on website, blog, community and

via interactive tools, lead generation techniques, (KPI: leads, lead conversion rate, time on site, shares/comments/likes)

- *Converting*: content strategy, driving sales, capitalizing on marketing investment with CRO¹, marketing automation and remarketing, home page and landing page optimization, 4 P's (KPI: sales, profit, AOV², Google analytics)
- *Engaging*: integrated communication strategy and content marketing, customer service and support, social CRM, enewsletters and promotion, boosting customer experience, engaging through time, thrilled customers, customer advocacy through social media marketing, repeat sales and referrals (KPI: repeat purchase/lifetime value, satisfaction, loyalty, advocacy).

(SmartInsights.com, Chaffey and Smith, 2013)

The RACE model relates to SOSTAC® by covering the main strategic areas, focusing on customers and defining goals. Situation analysis is the planning phase that defines the opportunities for the company in the digital context and aims at reaching prospects and getting visitors and fans. The company's objectives in digital marketing incite the interaction with customers and prospects, getting prospects interested, generating leads and encouraging content sharing. The digital marketing strategy defines a set of actions aimed at customer acquisition and converting leads into sales. Tactics and action refer to the key activities and techniques for converting and engaging the customers through implementation of strategy in SEO, social media and website. The control phase focuses on customer retention, long-term engagement and customer loyalty through performance monitoring, follow-up and optimization.

4 DIGITAL STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT FOR SALUSFIN

The aim of Chapter 4 is to create a customer-centric digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin. As a basis and the main references, the author is using SOSTAC® and RACE models and the Multichannel Marketing Growth Wheel (MMGW) framework. The models have been combined and edited by the author to represent the essen-

¹ CRO: Conversion Rate Optimization, a method of creating an experience for a website or landing page visitor with the goal of increasing the percentage of visitors that convert into customers. (Wikipedia)

² AOV: Average Order Value, important KPI that shows acquisition channels' value, or amount of money spent on each order, $AOV = \text{sales revenue} / \text{number of orders}$. (The Digital Marketing Glossary)

tial elements and steps of the strategic planning process in accordance with company's perspective and author's vision. The strategic planning framework for Salusfin is illustrated in *Figure 7*. The strategy development process follows the structure of the SOSTAC® framework and comprises six steps: S=situation analysis, O=objectives, S=strategy, T=tactics, A=actions, and C=Control. The company's goals are at heart of the digital strategy, according to the MMGW model. The placement of the RACE+GI steps (Reach-Act-Convert-Engage + Govern-Improve) within the framework is modified by the author for precision reasons, and thus provide more accurate strategic planning. RACE+GI steps define the strategic customer-centric orientation and correspond to the SOSTAC® framework. The last step "I" standing for "Improvement" is the ultimate phase of the strategy, which is part of the control and optimization process, and therefore is determined after "Control". Thus, improvement or step "I", is not part of the digital strategy as such, but rather represents the results of strategy implementation. The strategic goals are hence achieved using the RACE+G cycle steps.

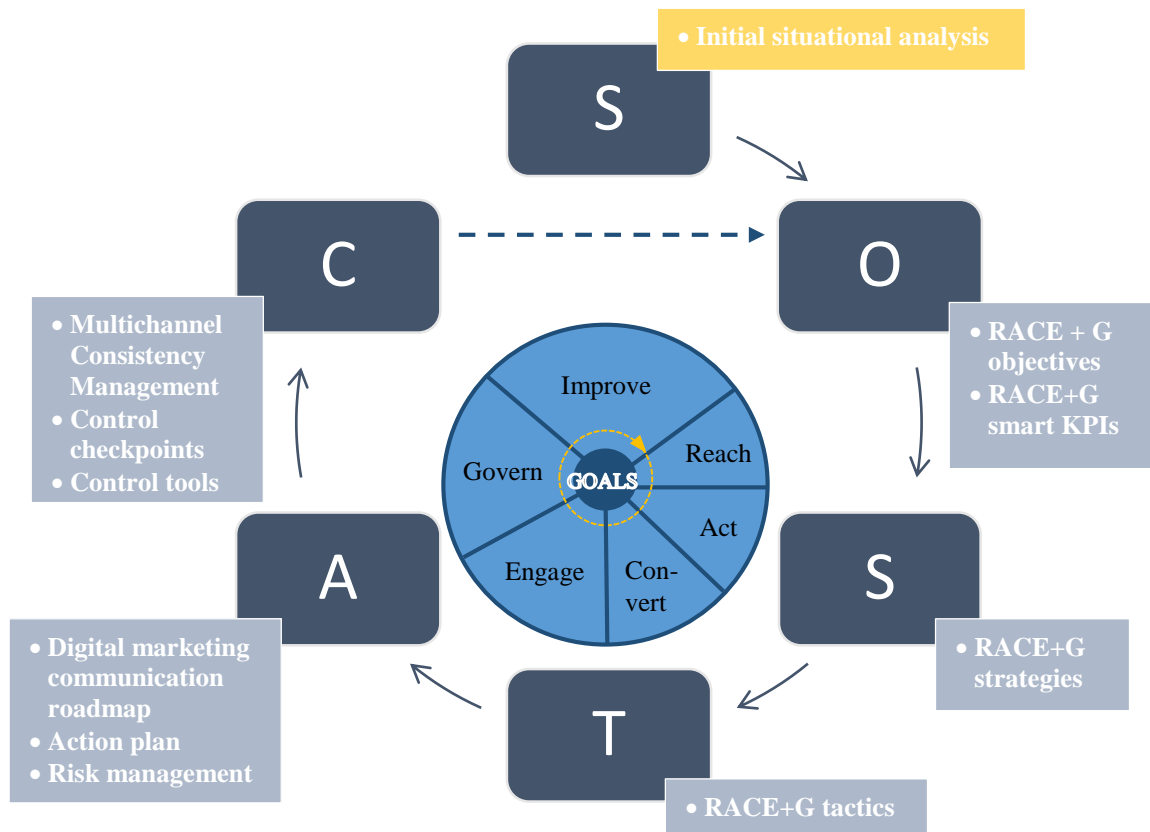


Figure 7. Strategic planning framework for Salusfin.

RACE+G steps of the inner circle refer to the main strategic steps for achieving business and customer goals. The initial situation analysis is performed in the earliest stage of the planning process to map the company's position and influential factors. The objectives, strategies and tactics steps are formulated based on RACE+G model approach. The "Objective" step defines Salusfin goals and sets SMART KPI's. The "Strategy" step formulates strategies for RACE+G phases. The "Tactics" step presents strategies for each step of RACE+G. The "Action" step focuses on formulating an action roadmap that includes main activities and media schedule. The "Control" step is intended for overlooking and managing all process steps, using a Multichannel Consistency Management approach. It monitors and assesses the performance based KPI criteria, and using specific tools. Control step results in the phase "Improve", which establishes areas for improvement and actions for optimization. The process is continuous, as it follows on to the step "Objectives", where new objectives and KPI's will be set.

4.1 Situation analysis

The initial phase of digital marketing communication plan is the analysis of company's current situation in the digital context and understanding the online marketplace. The analysis of Salusfin involves overviewing the internal and external factors in the digital environment that affect Salusfin. The key elements of the situation analysis are digital customers, demand, market trends, competitors, targets, resources, eSWOT, digital landscape, brand and online value proposition (OVP).

Digital customers. There are two types of prospects that Salusfin aims at targeting: small and medium size (SME) businesses and private consumers. In B2B sector, important target industries are construction, security, energy providers, operators, logistics (warehousing), healthcare (hospitals, elderly/handicapped care), retail (electronics) and online retail/precision shopping. The private target audience are technology, innovation and trend conscious people, placing great value on comfort, security, control and saving opportunity. They are looking for secure, peaceful, stress-free and controllable living. Their need for home control is motivated by such factors as children, pets, elderly relatives, regular travels, or simply a need to feel safe, secure, calm and confident. There is no clear gender distinction for potential private audience. The prospect profile is the fol-

lowing: age bracket between 25 and 55, technologically oriented, appreciate innovation and control, active users of internet and mobile devices, with stable revenue, prefer affordable prices, looking for turnkey and easy technological solutions, value security, safety and control, and want to save money. Digital audience of Salusfin is actively using internet, websites as primary source for information and service, and social platforms for additional customer insights and decision making, and service.

Demand. Business and private smart home solutions market is currently in its growth stage as various home-related management solutions have been available in the market for quite some time, but the market offering has encountered significant integration, interoperability and communication problems. A fully integrated intelligent home automation system that combines different smart solutions in one package and makes home or business a controllable and comfortable place, is a solution for which the demand is expected to triple by 2020, according to recent research and industry expert opinions. Moreover, demand is projected to increase by half for energy controlling equipment and home security solutions in five years. The revenues of cloud services and wireless communication technologies supporting smart homes are expected to reach billions of dollars in few year time. Based on a conducted industry research, Salusfin evaluates that there is an increasing demand and growing need for energy efficiency, improved security and safety solutions, and more comfortable and safe living. Moreover, consumers are looking for affordable and interoperable mass solutions, cost saving opportunities and a solution accessible through mobile devices.

Market trends and opportunities. As the customer preferences are changing towards more conscious choices regarding energy efficiency and privacy, the growing needs and requirements for safety, security, control and convenience are driving the growth of home automation market. Consumers are looking for highly usable solutions that provide data security. There is a growing demand for new home services as well as digital services as the population is aging. The market trend is moving toward higher-level digital technology integration and completely integrated solutions. The Internet of Things (IoT) trend, aiming at integrating wireless technologies and making devices interconnected and controllable, is emerging that has significant implications for the development of smart home systems and digital services. Technological progress, e.g. IP infra-

structure, cloud apps and services, wireless technologies, is enabling cost efficiency of smart home solutions. Developing countries are showing an increasing interest for smart home solutions, as they are looking for solutions to reduce energy consumption.

Competitor benchmarking. Home automation is a growing niche market that involves a significant number of strong and well established global players, such as Microsoft (R2 Studios, HomeOS), Google (Android@Home), Samsung/HTC (Zigbee chip), Apple/Savant Systems, IBM and Vodafone (Smarter home). Global energy companies provide energy consumption smart solutions, such as Fortum, Fiksu, Pacific Gas & Electric (SmartMeter™), RWE Germany (Smarthome). Local and global security companies are emphasizing the security aspect in their offer: Securitas, 24Koti, Verisure, Residential, Bosch Security, G4S, Homelink, Frontpoint security, HA, Guardianprotection. Operators are another competitive branch, with such companies as Sonera, Vahti, AT&T, Digital Life, Verizon, Home Control, Deutsche Telekom, QIVICON. Serious competitors for Salusfin are the companies within the same niche and offering similar products and services as Salusfin. The main competitors are both established and start-up home automation companies, such as There Corporation, Fibaro, Control4, MiCaseVerde, SmartThings, EKE Smarthome and Cozify.

Targets. Company's ultimate goal of digital marketing communication strategy is to acquire solid customer base and earn brand advocates, contribute to sales and increase market share. Short-term targets for Salusfin are: building brand identity, raising brand awareness and gaining credibility, increasing website traffic, boosting online presence, acquiring leads and a loyal fan base. On the long run, Salusfin aims at optimizing digital marketing efforts to enhance customer experience to achieve online sales.

Resources. For Salusfin, digital marketing communication efforts are cost-efficient, requiring human resources, time commitment, and financial costs are minimal as no paid media is used. As a start-up, Salusfin relies on its internal capabilities to manage the digital marketing communication efforts. The company's four employees represent the core resources for implementing the digital marketing strategy. Chief Sales and Marketing Officer is in charge of digital marketing strategy implementation, aided by the core

team. Although time constraint is significant, at the moment, the team meets twice per week and dedicates 30 minutes time weekly for digital marketing activities.

eSWOT. The eSWOT analysis for Salusfin is an evaluation of company's digital-specific internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the assessment of external environmental factors, which are market opportunities and threats of the digital environment. eSWOT analysis for Salusfin is presented in *Figure 8* below.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appealing and smart solution (high-tech, trendy, mobile) • Value proposition (security, comfort, control, ease of living, cost savings) • Affordable pricing strategy • Scalability/product customization, • Existing website • Online customer support, helpdesk • Available content (information, technical details, data, video clip) • New brand name • Glocal presence and contacts (insights) • Business management experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webpage content • Brand value communication • Online value proposition • Online presence, digital footprint • Links building • Company's perception • Unknown brand • Customer database • Limited financial resources • Limited people resources • Time limitations • Too strong emphasis on technology • Poor digital marketing experience • Content not posted online (information, data, technical details, video clip) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand building (website, SOME, blog) • Increasing digital footprint (blogs, bookmarking and publishing sites) • Active and regular posts across various platforms (website, blog, SOME) • Effective content strategy • Enable sharing options • User-generated content (discussions, comments, feedback, referrals) • Building links • Establishing own community • Social customer service • Online pricing strategy • New distribution channels (web shops, licensing) • Glocalization: local partners provide information on local needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitute products • Competitors' online value proposition (similar solutions and services) • Competitors' websites and content • Competitors' SOME management • Competitors' online presence • Customer acceptance and expectations • Competitors' fan base • Economic variables • Political regulations • Technological barriers (internet connection, 3G availability)

Figure 8. eSWOT analysis for Salusfin.

Digital landscape. The digital landscape of Salusfin relates to its current online visibility, performance and digital tools in use. Salusfin has a working website with main solution offering, product details and company information, and embedded customer service. The website provides direct links to Salusfin accounts in social media platforms. Salusfin has company accounts in Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube social networks. Additional accounts for Salusfin brand are registered in Pinterest, Instagram and Facebook platforms, but have not been in use yet. The current activity level in social media is low. Company's Facebook page has 48 likes. Salusfin publishes company and product/service related news and updates and other news topics about one to two times per month. Twitter account has been registered and not used since the first

tweet. Salusfin's LinkedIn account has a wider company profile with basic information, milestones, short-term plans, key market information, company values and differentiation factors. The company has a Google+ account that has acquired 2 248 views and six followers, however Google+ account has not been actually used for any posts, it contains a brief company presentation, contact information and a few photos on public display. In YouTube platform, Salusfin has one product demo video that has gathered 123 views and 4 subscriptions. Salusfin's digital footprint currently includes two partner sites where company's product is mentioned. The company is registered and has its own informative page and a demo video in a specialist platform seeking investors and a platform for Finnish startups (accessible to members). However, Salusfin has no digital presence in any publisher, bookmarking, content sharing or review platforms, it has no aggregators or influencers, and for now does not have a blog.

Brand. Salusfin aims at raising brand awareness online, as the brand is not yet known to a wide audience. Currently, the Salusfin brand value proposition is a technological user-friendly and easy to install home automation turnkey solution for a smarter living. Main customer benefits are safety, security, control, peace of mind and savings to the customer, in addition to its affordable price. Customers have the benefits of a wireless, easily installable and manageable home system controllable at a distance. Right now, the brand's slogan summarizes the product's technical aspect, which is "Home automation in your pocket". However, as the company will introduce a new brand name and a logo, which will take on a more customer-centered approach, brand message and the slogan will be changed to better suit the brand identity. Salusfin home automation offers a truly value adding service and a functional product for home security and comfort for the user, which needs to be emphasized as part of brand value proposition. The brand shall be associated with a simple tool that makes home or business a smarter and safer place.

Online value proposition (OVP). Online value proposition of the company represents a key information resource for brand, product and services, and for communication of brand message, brand values and customer benefits. Customer value is generated through an informative and customer-oriented website content and embedded services. The OVP statement and brand message is not visible on the site and is not clearly formulated. Salusfin website has an appealing, distinctive and simple design, and content

with text, sliding images and pictures related to the company's background and product offering details. The website content is limited for now, but more product specific technical information will be added to the website in the nearest time. Efficient customer service and support is one of the crucial elements of company's online value proposition. Salusfin support team provides direct customer service, maintenance and support functions, offers expertise and consulting through own website helpdesk, email and Skype. Currently the OVP needs further development and more features to enable meaningful interaction and engaging customer experiences with the brand.

4.2 Objectives

Setting realistic and measurable objectives for Salusfin is the next step of the strategic digital marketing planning process. The primary task is to define what Salusfin aims to achieve by "going digital" and by implementing a digital marketing communication strategy. Defining the opportunities enabled via a digital strategy provides answers to the first research question. The main reasons for Salusfin to adopt a digital strategy can be defined using a "5 S" objective approach (speak, serve, sizzle, save, sell):

- *Speak* – active brand communication, online exposure, social participation, publishing and sharing content, contribution to user-generated content
- *Serve* – service, help and online support, gaining customer insight
- *Sizzle* – acquiring fans and followers, extended brand experience, user engagement and sharing, enhanced social customer service
- *Save* – cost-efficiency of owned and earned media
- *Sell* – contribution to sales and online sales.

Outlining broader goals helps in determining a development path, setting a clear vision, and revealing how Salusfin can benefit from digital marketing communication activities on the long run. Broader goals address the following areas: effective/optimized digital marketing communication efforts, established and trusted brand, enhanced customer experience, loyalty & brand advocacy (influencers, referrals, recommendations, reviews, buzz), improved customer insight, own community and wisdom of crowd, expanded business network and partnerships, sales contribution and online sales.

Short-term goals are the focus of the digital marketing communication strategy. The short-term strategic objectives are determined using the extended RACE (Reach-Act-Convert-Engage) based model, which is RACE + G (Govern). With the help of the RACE+G system, it is possible to structure the main strategic objectives for digital marketing communication. Clear goals for each stage of the planning process enable accurate digital marketing communication strategy planning. Salusfin's key strategic objectives are:

Key Objective 1. Build brand awareness.

Key Objective 2. Initiate brand interaction.

Key Objective 3. Achieve conversion to fans/followers/subscribers.

Key Objective 4. Reach loyal fan base and initiate brand engagement.

Key Objective 5. Maintain brand engagement.

Through defined digital marketing communications goals, the RACE+G system approach enables to specify the key performance indicators (KPIs) for Salusfin's each strategic step. Based on the RACE model by Smart Insights, KPIs can be determined for each stage of the RACE+G cycle. KPIs allow to review the efficiency of digital marketing communication efforts at each stage checkpoints, and compare the actual performance results to the objectives in the final Control phase. It is necessary to set SMART targets for the RACE+G model, which are specific, measurable, actionable, relevant and time-related metrics for assessing Salusfin performance step-by-step. The SMART KPIs for Salusfin are presented in *Figure 9*.

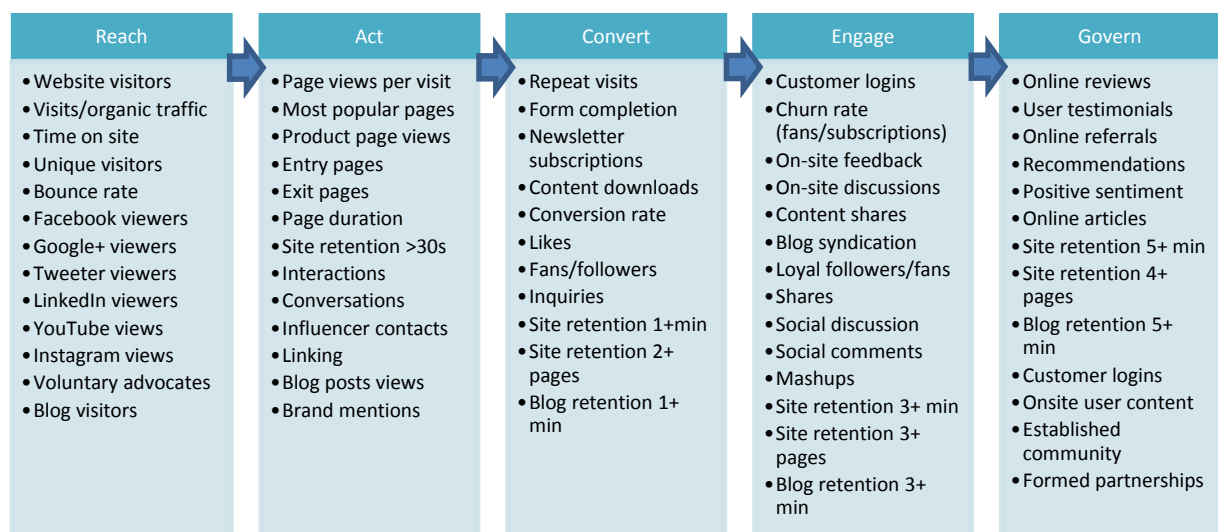


Figure 9. SMART KPIs for Salusfin using a RACE+G framework.

As part of the objectives setting phase, the main digital marketing communication tools have to be determined in order of importance and relevance for the company. For this purpose, the Digital Marketing Radar framework (Chapter 3.2.4) is applied. Salusfin's main focus is placed on company's website, social networking and sharing tools, and a blog. The prioritized tools for Salusfin are the following:

- Company's website
- Social blogging: company's blog
- Social networking tools: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+
- Social sharing: YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, SlideShare.

4.3 Strategy

Strategy is the basis and the reason behind all actions and decisions that a company has to make. The strategy step of the digital marketing communication planning process requires defining how Salusfin can achieve its objectives. Digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin has to be specific and structured, and aligned with the objectives presented in the previous chapter.

4.3.1 Development of the strategic approach

Salusfin strategy has to be formulated according to the key strategic objectives and aligned with the RACE+G system. The overall strategy can be presented in the form of five sub-strategic steps, formulated in the form of questions and answers. The answers form a complete strategic picture and determine the main steps of the strategy:

Sub-strategy 1. How to build brand awareness? – Content placement strategy

Sub-strategy 2. How to initiate brand interaction? – Connection strategy

Sub-strategy 3. How to achieve conversion? – Conversion strategy

Sub-strategy 4. How to reach brand engagement? – Engagement strategy.

Sub-strategy 5. How to maintain an engagement? – Nurturing strategy.

The sub-strategies help creating a structured and goal oriented strategic vision for Salusfin. As can be clearly seen from the list of sub-strategic questions, they correspond to the second research question and maintain the initial purpose of the present study – developing a digital marketing communication strategy.

The author affirms that sub-strategies can be arranged into one framework to determine a strategic perspective for Salusfin that can be represented visually. The extensive strategic vision, shown in *Figure 10*, depicts the main strategic steps of Salusfin strategy, aligned with the “5S” objectives and integrated into RACE+G framework.

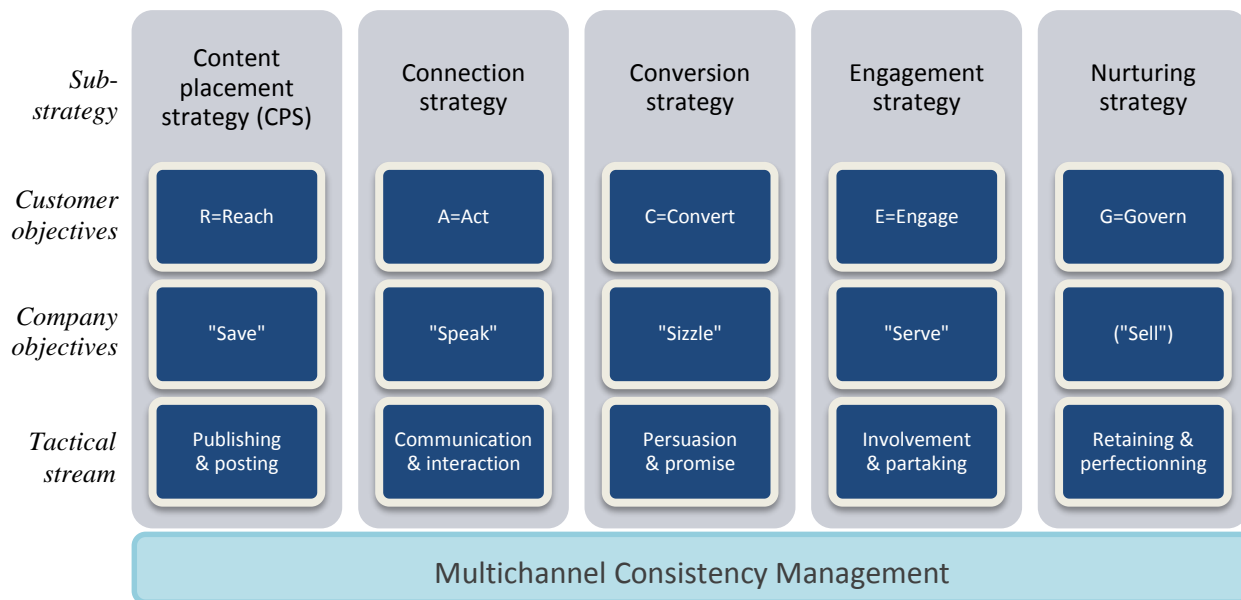


Figure 10. Salusfin extensive strategic vision.

The strategic vision includes five sub-strategic elements, which define customer and company objectives, and formulate the main tactical streams for each element. At each strategic step, the level of audience involvement increases. The nurturing step helps maintaining high level of fan engagement through nurturing tactics that help building relationships that ultimately lead to sales. All elements of the strategic vision are overseen by Multichannel Consistency Management efforts, which ensure that all strategic elements are coherent and consistent with the unique online value proposition (OVP).

All the steps shown in the extensive strategic vision (*Figure 10*) involve digital content. The author suggests that at each strategic phase, a certain aspect of digital content has an accentuated role. The author maintains that with each sub-strategic step, the audience involvement grows, hence the content type and focus evolve according to its intent. In turn, prospect behavior is subject to change from emotional to more rational choices as the prospect is getting more involved with the brand. The process of content development is shown in *Figure 11*.

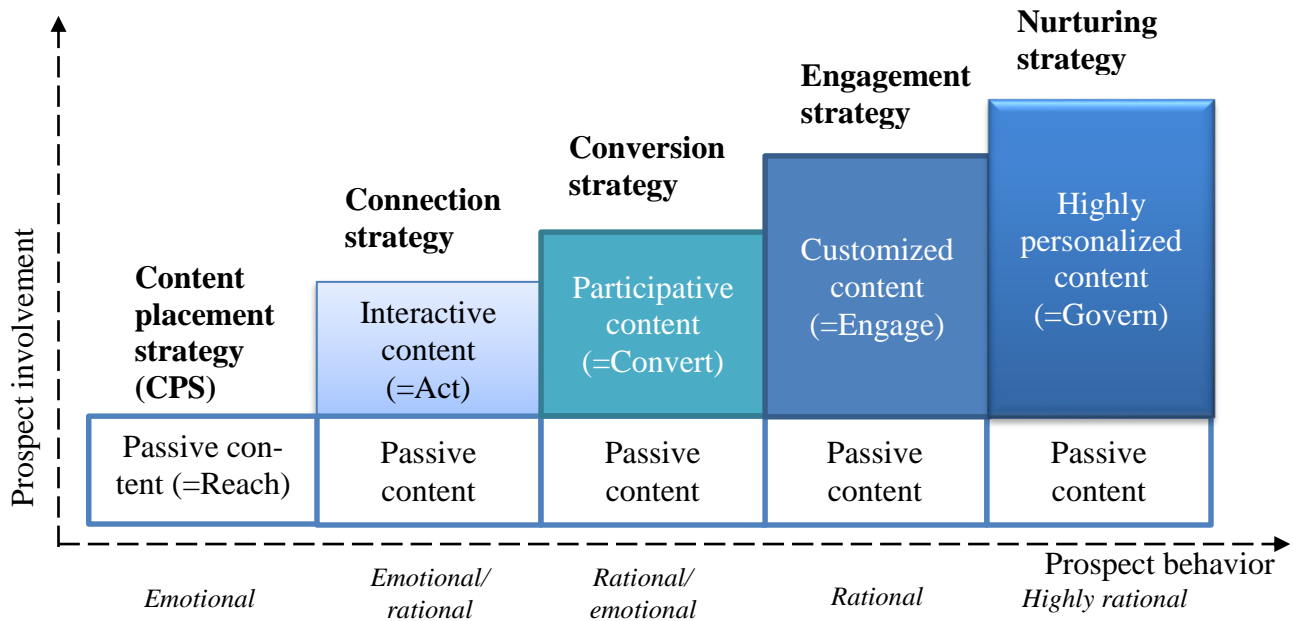


Figure 11. Salusfin content evolution strategy.

4.3.2 Content placement strategy (CPS)

The first step in Salusfin’s digital marketing communication strategy is a content placement strategy (CPS) that supports the online value proposition of Salusfin. Its purpose can be stated shortly: it is intended for the prospects to create a digital contact with the Salusfin brand. The online value proposition is the quintessential foundation for Salusfin content placement strategy. It is a fundamental step in brand building, which communicates the essence of the brand: its promise and identity. In other words, the brand is “selling” its vision and value for the customer by communicating clearly how it can satisfy the customer needs by providing unique and valuable benefits. Salusfin’s brand focuses on values, functional benefits and emotional satisfaction for the customer. It is imperative to communicate precisely and briefly what the brand stands for in the earliest phase of strategy implementation. For communicating the brand identity, it is crucial to determine the voice and the emotional characteristics for the brand well in advance. In other words, in which language, style and sentiment does the brand communication happen so that the brand can be associated with a specific personality (formal, funny, conversational, neutral, etc.). For Salusfin, the brand personality is friendly and positive, with a touch of “out of the ordinary”. The brand value is communicated to the customers via a consistent online value proposition on company’s website: stating the brand’s unique promise and communicating its personality in a unique style.

Brand communication happens through a rich, useful, relevant, consistent and targeted content, which becomes a source of value creation for the customer. Developing the right content placement strategy requires understanding how it can benefit Salusfin in building brand awareness. For Salusfin, CPS aims primarily at *reaching* and *growing the audience* by making the technical product more understandable, valuable and relatable to ordinary users, appealing to the needs of the audience. Therefore, the content has to be brand specific and focused on a target audience. Salusfin aims at serving the needs and delivering value to two categories of prospects: private and B2B. A clear segmentation has to be made in order to adjust the offer to fit the target customer group needs. The strategy is realized through publishing and posting of meaningful content that increases brand visibility using four tools: website and search engine optimization (SEO), blogging and social platforms. It is crucial to note that an effective content placement strategy has to be consistent with the OVP and coherent in all platforms.

The passive content of the CPS focuses on meaningful and credible content creation on company's website and company's blog, supporting the brand identity and delivering a promise to the customers. Meaningful content refers to the focus on customer needs and customer benefits. Credible content emphasizes an authentic, truthful and personalized customer perspective. Emphasizing how Salusfin can be helpful, beneficial, actionable, relatable and interesting to its target customer groups is the essence of the CPS. The passive content aims to raise curiosity and interest of prospects, and to direct prospects to discover the brand further. The communication is relevant and to the point. The website passive content is targeted at both groups of customers, private and business, but involves a clear distinction for each group. For business and private individuals, the passive content focuses on the emotional aspect, by presenting, impressing, raising questions and describing brand values, however, for private users, the focus is placed on a more entertaining aspect. At this stage, the goal is to make a good first impression, and make the prospects acquainted with the brand promise via the online value proposition, providing information on how the solution can be helpful and valuable to them in their everyday life. The company's blog is an extension of the brand, its passive content aims at providing unique, valuable and relatable stories of a brand with a human and customer-oriented approach, sharing authentic insights and genuine experiences, data and useful additional information related to the brand in a more personal way. Blog pas-

sive content strives to make the technical product understandable, interesting, practical and “less boring” to regular users. Both types of passive content, website and blog, integrate different media, such as text, graphic and video, aimed at communicating the brand value proposition. The tactical details of the passive content strategy are presented in the chapter 4.4.1.

In the process of content creation, content placement strategy has to involve a search strategy, also referred to as search engine optimization (SEO). This technical aspect is an inseparable and crucial strategic element that aims at making the main content on website and blog findable in organic search engine results and enable traffic driving to the website. Being found through an organic search is very important to Salusfin, because through organic search the content achieves significantly better visibility in search results and drives higher traffic to passive content pages. Moreover, webpage and blog passive content has to be optimized for findability, meaning that their structure has to be effective, accessible and user friendly, and enable the sharing and syndicating option for users. This is a crucial step for improving search results for Salusfin and encouraging sharing and syndication of passive content. The steps for search strategy and page optimization tactics are illustrated in chapter 4.4.1.

Social networks represent a valuable element of content placement strategy for Salusfin. The key to social media content placement is to be customer focused, concise and short. The aim is to get the audience interested in the brand and direct the visitor traffic towards the webpage for more information via links. As part of the CPS step, social media implicates content placement using a repurposing approach. Shorter content for social media posts is created via content syndication or re-using of the existent passive content from a website and a blog to create shorter social posts. Social media CPS is heavily customer focused and targets two main customer groups with messages related to company, industry, brand and solutions. It is one of the first steps in establishing a brand and building brand awareness. For social media, the brand voice and sentiment should be consistent with a defined brand personality, while the tone should be appropriate for the platform in use (e.g. professional and neutral for LinkedIn), however, emotional enough for the audience to build up on it. Depending on the platform, the choice of tone has to be sustained through all publications. Consistent and regular publishing in social media

is the key. Using distribution automation tools to distribute content makes content placement on various platforms manageable and easier to control. However, some manual editing of content might still be necessary to add a human touch to it.

4.3.3 Connection strategy

The connection strategy for Salusfin is a commitment to *speak* and *listen* to the audience: it is a continuous and responsive communication process with the audience. The connection strategy is enabled through interaction and aims at establishing meaningful and regular interactive dialogues with the target audience. Because this step is focused on how to get audience to interact with the Salusfin brand, its main efforts are concentrated on social media platforms, as social media offers opportunities to increase the brand outreach. The company's website and blog have a supportive and inspiring function. Social media interaction with an audience allows to highlight a more human aspect of the brand and reveal people behind the brand, as communication and dialogues happen between real human beings, representatives of the brand. When dealing with people, it is important to have a social mindset and soft skills, interpersonal and customer service skills, which are certainly an asset for social media communication. When initiating discussions, it is important to choose topics that are significant and meaningful to the audience. Taking a pro-active approach to conversations is not enough, however. Social media communication implies rapid responsiveness. The audience expects a real-time response and a rapid reaction from the company. Therefore, the brand should demonstrate its willingness to listen and to respond accordingly. As communication is the key to connect with prospects, replying is the key to maintaining the discussions, and eventually leading to prospect conversion. It might necessitate additional persons to maintain conversations, therefore it might be useful to empower employees to take part in discussions. Effective dialogue requires active participation, which in turn requires considerate human and time investments. There is no point in starting conversations, if there is no commitment to pursuing it and following up on it. Employees can be a valuable asset for expanding the reach of the brand by actively participating in social discussion and being voluntary advocates of the brand. It is important to note that communication in social media should not be limited to own website or social brand sites, as other platforms can help in forming connections with the right audience. Conversation starters

and other useful connection tactics are explored in Chapter 4.4.2. Social listening is a significant part of the connection strategy, as it enables to monitor conversations, get information, feedback, perspectives and gain a valuable customer insight that can be used for analyzing own online activities, adjusting and making improvements to the online value proposition, tactics, product and services. Social listening, collecting, reporting and analytical tools are particularly helpful in this step.

Salusfin's website and the blog have supporting and strong influencing roles in the connection strategy. In this step, website and blog content aims to inspire and influence the audience through influencer blog posts, communicate the brand values clearly so that they address specific customer needs, advise the audience on problems and questions that might arise during the discussions on social media platforms, and refer the audience to solution specific landing pages on the website and the blog. The website's solution pages are dedicated to providing relevant and inspiring information, addressing consumer needs and advising the audience. The website and blog structure encourage the communication and provide platforms for on-site interaction. The details of connection tactics are presented in *Table 3* of Chapter 4.4.2.

4.3.4 Conversion strategy

Conversion strategy is a logical continuation of the connection strategy, as Salusfin continues its pro-active and responsive communication efforts with the target audience. The accent, however, is different. In social brand sites, Salusfin aims at establishing trust and earn credibility. Quality, not quantity, relevance, frequency and high response rate of conversations are the decisive factors for this particular strategic step. Many of trust and credibility issues depend on the ability of the brand to respond timely and accurately to questions/enquiries, and exchange information in a meaningful way. To achieve truly meaningful communication, Salusfin shall strive to approach the right prospects, i.e. the prospects that show true interest towards the brand, the company and the product, and concentrate on driving meaningful conversations forward with "quality" prospects. The discussions aim at educating and informing the prospects, helping them understand what the brand and the solution are about, showing value to the target audience to boost brand credibility. Each social media post and each reply have a specific pur-

pose, and most importantly, they are referring the audience to website's online value proposition, product or brand landing pages. Through relevant, educative and helpful conversations that earn the target audience's trust, the primary aim of this strategic step is to deliver a *promise* to prospects, get the prospects interested and encourage them to make the next move. The promise is an assurance that they shall get something unique, valuable and useful in return of their commitment to the brand, i.e. conversion. For them, following a Salusfin brand site shall mean that it would be valuable and useful to them to be involved with the brand. The goal is to get prospects to follow Salusfin social brand sites through "sizzling" posts and with the help of various conversion tactics that are described in Chapter 4.4.3.

Website and blog content should enable syndication and sharing options, and provide a participation platform, where meaningful interaction can take place. Landing pages shall be "sizzling", effective and informative, providing data-driven, enticing, relevant and credible content that supports and encourages conversion. The online value proposition on a website's customer page shall emphasize the brand's promise, including value-adding customer benefits available through registration. The website or the blog shall encourage the audience to take the next step in their brand involvement process easily and conveniently, i.e. taking the action with the help of on-site calls-to-actions, suggesting and encouraging to subscribe, to enquire or to download material. Cookies permission shall inform the users about their use, but most of all, they shall enable a more responsive and relevant brand content to the target audience.

4.3.5 Engagement strategy

Once the prospects are converted, it does not necessarily imply that they are engaged. It is important to understand that engagement is not measured in numbers of fans and followers. Engagement is a continuous activity for both parties of an established fan connection, it is merely a beginning of what might become a lasting relationship. Therefore, it is a crucial step in customer relationship development. The fan relationship cannot exist on its own for long, let alone develop, therefore it has to be maintained and "nourished", in the same way as human relationships do. The goal for Salusfin is to turn followers into *loyal* and *active fans*.

Engagement is a rational choice of the prospects. They make a thoughtful decision to engage because they expect to get value in return and because they were promised value-adding services and benefits. Therefore, consumers have certain expectations and requirements in regards to the brand, and their needs have to be fulfilled. In social media, the brand shall aim to capture the fans by delivering regular, frequent and enticing posts in various formats to convince the fan group of the unique brand benefits and value in use. To deepen trust and credibility and make the brand more familiar to users, social posts shall strongly incite and encourage active participation of fans in content creation through mashups and shares. Additional pro-active efforts and initiatives of Salusfin might be needed to approach the fans and followers in meaningful, relevant or even creative ways. Brand social posts can be directly intended for the fan group and customized, involving “special treatment” features, such as “information for fans only”, “special offer”, fan contests, fan questions and other types of activity. Social posts can refer the fans to the website’s landing pages with login-options.

Active and fan targeted social media communication should involve efficient monitoring and listening, because fans expect to be heard, to get response and to be served rapidly. Social monitoring enables Salusfin to re-engage with customers on a more personal level, by offering solutions that fit particular needs. Monitoring and listening allows to pick on topics of concern or interest and truly help, support and advise the fans in their everyday lives, and take the business opportunities as they come. At this stage, it is utterly important to monitor brand reputation and brand sentiment in social platforms, and deal with bad mentions effectively both pro-actively and reactively. Maintaining positive brand reputation creates additional value for the customers, therefore it is in company’s interest to manage and protect online brand reputation and handle any reputation issues with care. It might be useful to create reputation management guidelines for more efficiency and consistency of communication.

Engagement strategy has a strong servicing element, as loyal fans need to be “served”. Social customer service is an integral part of the engagement strategy. The social service function is enabled in social media via social continuous monitoring, accurate customer service and timely response to customer interactions, questions, comments, suggestions, feedback, etc. as well as on website through helpdesk and online chat. Salusfin

website shall provide other value-adding services and benefits via a login option, where registered users have access to customized member content. Through on-site login, both private consumers and B2B customers can access Salusfin customized member space with valuable member content.

4.3.6 Nurturing strategy

It is a known fact that many social media users become engaged to the brand and convert into fans only for a short time and for the benefit of gaining access to brand offers and discounts, after which they see no point in continuing their brand engagement and become “passive” followers who eventually drop out. Therefore, for Salusfin it is important to distinguish the “quality” fans and nurture them. Nurturing strategy can be described as a technique for turning the loyal fans into *leads* who are ready to make the ultimate move and purchase the product. It is the final attempt to convince the customer and motivate him to purchase, as the ultimate goal of this step is selling. Nurturing is a personalized approach to fans aiming at developing a lasting, meaningful and beneficial relationship between the customer and the brand.

For Salusfin, nurturing strategy is an important effort to commit the loyal fans to the brand, further convince and support them in their rational choice. Nurturing a loyal fan base implies anticipating their needs, making them feel valuable, finding ways of showing appreciation to them, providing incentives for further actions and focusing on a personalized approach to them. Salusfin shall aim at establishing a unique kind of relationship with the loyal fans, making efforts to boost their commitment to the brand and stimulate their active brand engagement so that the loyal fans become advocates of the brand. Understanding and knowing the loyal fan base enables Salusfin to segment their loyal fans more accurately and approach them in a unique, personal and relevant way. Nurturing is an ongoing commitment to take care of the relationship, to sustain ongoing communication, to continuously provide benefits and dedicate time to the loyal fans, as they need to be “nurtured” through a transient phase until becoming sales-ready leads and eventually customers. For loyal fans, commitment to the brand is an opportunity to get “special treatment”. As nurtured fans, they have access to highly personalized content, timely and relevant information, personal benefits and anticipate on-going attention

from the brand. They expect to feel important and valuable, and they want to get information, communication and offers made just for them that can truly benefit them. Moreover, they are active on social sites and they willingly share their interest and commitment to the brand by actively discussing, posting and syndicating brand related content, reviewing, referring and commenting on personal experiences with the brand.

4.4 Tactics

This chapter is dedicated to the tactics of strategic planning. It is the implementation section of the strategy presented in the previous chapter. The purpose of the strategic tactics is to create a meaningful experience for the user at each stage of brand interaction on various digital platforms. This chapter presents practical suggestions for tactics for Salusfin digital marketing communication strategy.

4.4.1 Content placement tactics for reaching

Content tactics are related to the content placement strategy (CPS) of Salusfin presented earlier, aiming at meaningful, relevant and targeted content placement activities using appropriate digital tools according to a defined strategy.

Website. Authentic and credible content placement that supports the brand promise is the essence of brand building for Salusfin. The focus of CPS is placed on customer benefits, customer perspective and their needs: the basic consumer needs are comfort, security, safety; the main benefits are financial savings opportunity, protection, piece of mind, turnkey solution; the emotional gains are innovation, green values and energy saving; and the brand promises are easiness, controllability and control on fingertip at any location. Salusfin's webpage shall have precise offer targeting, B2B or private consumer group, it would be helpful to enable the visitor to pick a customer group, for instance, by adding a "Get started" or "Choose your category" button. The online value proposition and the brand promise shall be clearly stated. Structural changes and editing are needed to enable the OVP to be more visible, precise and targeted. OVP shall emphasize the unique offer, customer benefits and competitive advantage of Salusfin. Key customer benefits should be highlighted via precise and short statements: "A simple tool

to make home or business a smarter and safer place”, “Have control of your house on fingertip from any location” or “Offer yourself a stress-free life at low price”. The new brand name shall be used in communication to be associated with the product/solution. The brand slogan shall be precise and short, visibly and uniformly stated on the website, describing the essence of the online value proposition and a promise to the customer, whether it is affordability or safety, easiness or comfort. For instance, “Affordable smart living”, “Living smarter and safer”, “One app to control your home”, “Save money and be safe”, “Stress-free and controllable living”, “Take care of your home with one push of a button”, “Control, great living, one app”.

From a structural viewpoint, Salusfin’s webpage sustains the basic conditions of an effective site with simple design, user friendliness and clear navigation. However, the home page size shall be suitable for viewing, in a convenient format that does not require scrolling down. The page loading time shall not exceed 4 seconds. Sliding images shall contain short and targeted informative messages, each one with specific purpose, not including too many words, but rather focusing on the essential customer benefits, and not repeating themselves. Some suggestions to website structure are the following: blog page or a link to blog, news page, on-site search engine and a discussion platform are important parts of a website that have to be included. By adding an “Explore” option, the brand can indicate its intention to guide the customer through unique experiences. By including an “Expertise” option, the company’s professional competency can be further emphasized, contributing to brand credibility. Having an option for providing in-depth technical information, such as guides, manuals or instructions can add value for technically oriented customers.

Blog. The company’s blog can be placed on a separate platform accessible through a webpage link or be integrated in the website. The blog shall provide additional and valuable customer insights into Salusfin solution using textual, graphic and video formats. The blog intends to share different types of information, unique stories and experiences in a truly personal, authentic and truthful way with a significantly more human touch to make the brand and the product more understandable, relatable and credible. Short blog posts with effective titles and concise messages, involving illustrations or demonstrations are efficient for drawing the attention of the audience. *Table 1* illustrates the features and suggestions for content placement tactics on company’s website and blog.

Table 1. Content placement tactics for website and blog.

Target audience	Intent	Format/Tools	Topic examples
Private/ B2B	Discover	Explore tab/button Images/videos Home page Infographics Presentations	Product presentation, authentic data, credible brand storytelling with illustrations, visionary topics
	Communicating brand values	Homepage Brand page Short blog posts	Slogan, promise statements, brand values, clear targeted messages
	Impress	Graphics Videos Product/app demos “Explore” button	Interesting questions & answers, new angles, insights, smart home visualization, behind the scenes
	Question/wonder	Customer journey Expert opinions “Expertise” tab/button	“Could it be for me?”, customer insights, demonstrations
Private	Entertain	Gamification Videos/demos Widgets Short blog posts Background music Humor	Technological quizzes, trivia, technology reviews, interesting & curious facts, competition winners, funny pictures/caricatures

SEO. Primarily, the website has to have a search engine friendly structure. In technical terms, a thorough research must be performed to determine keywords, combinations of words and sentences for the organic search: branded words (Salusfin), generic words including two words (home management, home automation, smart home) or generic long-tail words with at least a three word long combinations (“turnkey smart home solution”, “smart home solution provider”, “Finnish home automation solution”). Search words can be questions and answers, synonyms or locations, therefore it is essential to keep in mind a customer focus when defining search words and word combinations, so that the results of search show up on the first page of search engine results. In order to have a higher ranking in search engine results, it is necessary to attribute many diverse phrases relevant to Salusfin, including location names. Sentences and locations seem to be the preferred options for search for many internet users. It would be useful to have a diversified search strategy, including more traffic sources and other search engines than only Google. Second important technical aspect involves link-building activities, internal and external. To be truly findable, the content has to have linkable objects, documents and other assets, in other words all content types, including text, images, videos, infographics and tools have to include descriptive keywords and proper names based on *SEO*. Furthermore, the website and blog content have to be shareable. Sharing is an im-

portant feature that has to be enabled through website optimization, including tags, metatags and title elements that are used for search and social sharing. Moreover, website's or blog's architecture shall enable the sharing function by integrating options for sharing, bookmarking and syndicating content, such as share buttons, plug-ins and widgets ShareThis or AddThis, and RSS feeds. Website's and blog's content shall provide links to other digital content. The use of popular words like "most", "best" or "hot" increases significantly the content sharing. Furthermore, all online content has to be accessible through various devices, especially optimized for mobile use.

Social media. For Salusfin, social media content placement is about targeting customers with the right type of precise content. Primarily, all social brand sites should summarize the essence of the company: clearly stating the brand promise, present the story of the brand and demonstrate company's development over time, for instance, company timeline. The brand posts shall aim at catching the audience's attention with highlights and encourage the visitors to explore the brand further. Brand social posts can include text, image or video content, and links to the website's or blog's passive content. Prioritized social media platforms for content placement tactics are presented below in *Table 2*.

Table 2. Content placement tactics for social media platforms.

Target audience	Tool/platform	Content type	Tone
Private /B2B	Facebook	Text, hashtags, images, video, links	Conversational, friendly
	Twitter	Short messages of 140 characters, hashtags, images, links	
	LinkedIn	Text, images, video, links	Professional, neutral
	Google+	Text, hashtags, images, video, links	Friendly
	YouTube	Videos, short texts, links	Neutral
	Pinterest	Images, videos, descriptions with hashtags	Neutral, informative
Private	Instagram	Images, videos, hashtags, short comments and texts	Friendly, light
B2B	SlideShare	eBook, presentation, links	Informative, neutral

Each post shall include hashtags (#) in front of relevant words and phrases, and links to the original content on website or blog, where more information can be obtained. Using the existing "trending" hashtags in posts can drive more attention to the brand. For social media posts, the main tactic is the repurposing of content: the existing content from website and blog is effectively re-used and syndicated for creating short and targeted

content for social posts. The syndication of passive content can be structured in the following way: blog post or website content feed with RSS using site tags, and posts to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+ brand pages. For effective syndication, a number of automation tools can be used for feeds and posts to suit the social media platform format, they are described in Chapter 4.5.

4.4.2 Connection tactics for interaction

Social media. The aim of the connection tactics is to encourage discussion, initiate dialogues and interaction with Salusfin target audience. To connect with target audience, communication has to be relevant and topics of conversations significant and useful to consumers. Social platforms provide an excellent space for purposeful messages. They allow to connect prospects and representatives of the brand on a more personal level. Starting out by posting specific company, brand or product related topics might not be enough to prompt an interaction. To encourage a dialogue, a number of effective tactics and conversation starters can be used to lay ground for further discussion. To trigger a conversation, it is crucial to take the right approach, i.e. friendly, open and encouraging, and most importantly, to choose the appropriate tone for conversation and drive the conversation forward in a constructive manner. Discussion topics have to be useful for consumers and authentic enough to engage in conversations with prospects. The conversational arena is diverse, ranging from industry or trends to random and interesting topics that can be directly or indirectly related to Salusfin. Effective conversation starters are icebreaker questions or helpful tips that facilitate the connection. Posts that ask questions or present “best hints” and “how-tos” tend to get a higher audience response rate. Posting funny pictures, videos, quotes, stories or using surprising and creative titles will definitely get the audience’s attention. Humor and creativity can help go a long way, but all in right proportions and keeping in mind the brand’s personality. Sharing truthful and authentic stories with personal touch can be highly appreciated by the audience: real-life stories, thoughts, opinions, experiences, achievements, daily happenings, people, nature or objects around, working environment, pets, trips, or even food, supported by visual material, e.g. pictures of employees doing something, can be rewarding. Company and brand related topics can be interesting, diverse or even unexpected, ranging from news, updates, facts, demonstrations, publications, events, to customers,

partners, coverages, reviews, statistics, articles, scoops, interviews, feedback, recommendations, issues and solutions, surveys, quizzes and links to brand related online resources. Publishing posts in other platforms and sharing links to them on brand sites and including some comments is quite easy to do, yet useful. Other types of various posts can include inspiring quotes, inspiring people, curious facts, book recommendations or simply interesting links and other peoples' posts and updates. Posts with visuals, whether they are photos, illustrations, cartoons or videos, usually get more attention. For instance, links and comments to pictures in Instagram and Pinterest or videos in Instagram or YouTube can create interesting posts.

A very effective way to get into discussions is to search for other platforms (forums, blogs or social communities) with content related to company's topic of interest and actively take part in the discussions. By participating in discussions, commenting and posting can lead to forming connections with the right audience. The right audience can be then approached and referred to brand sites and own website more efficiently. Engaging directly with important influencers can be extremely beneficial for gaining credibility and increasing brand engagement.

For enhancing the brand identity and personalizing the brand, it is recommended to use the personal pronoun "we" for posts and answers, referring to representatives of the brand. It is crucial to maintain a unified tone in all brand related posts in accordance with a chosen brand identity. If all brand related communication is serious, highly technical and informative, it would be extremely difficult to be credible on social media with a playful, funny tone and too many jokes. It is preferable to keep focus on a regular consumer and reply in a simple and understandable language.

Communication efforts, however, shall not be only focused on speaking, but must involve a great deal of listening activities and response to the audience. Showing the brand's ability to listen and to respond rapidly and accurately is extremely important for establishing connections and building trust. Successful interaction with the target audience requires regularity and frequency. Social media communication efforts need significant time commitment and human resource allocation, as well as the use of specific tools for social listening, monitoring and reporting that can be very helpful in understanding and analyzing the brand position and finding areas for improvement.

Website and blog. Website and blog content supports the communication that takes place in brand social sites with specific solution pages, effective landing pages and targeted informative content. The website and blog content aims at communicating brand values and benefits, inspire and influence visitors with relevant posts, messages and data on how the solution can be valuable and helpful to consumers. Website and blog structures provide communication platforms and interactive options for users. The blog posts, either written by the company or other influencers, incite visitors to engage into a meaningful conversation, ask questions and get relevant information. *Table 3* hereafter presents the main connection tactics for website and blog.

Table 3. Connection tactics for website and blog.

Target audience	Intent	Format/Tools	Topic examples
Private /B2B	Inspire/influence	Voluntary advocates Guest blogging	Influencer blogs/posts, tips, how-tos, Q&A
	Brand values & addressing needs	Presentations/videos Blog posts Infographics, guides Product demos Expert guidance blogs Discussion forums FAQs/Q&A pages	Security/energy issues, green values, real-life situations, technical and non-technical answers, sustainability, step-by-step guides, future vision
	Advise	Online consultation FAQs/Q&A pages Discussion forum Expert blog posts Interviews	Online consultation booking option, typical problems and solutions, expert interviews
	Communicate	Discussion forums Surveys Participation platform Online chat Call back facility	Blog posts with questions, tips, hints, hot topics Questionnaires, polls on discussion platforms

4.4.3 Conversion tactics: a promise

Social media. The brand social site communication shall drive forward meaningful conversations with “quality” prospects to earn brand trust and credibility. Brand credibility can be enabled through authentic, personal and relevant brand stories, truthful testimonials and shared practical experiences. Valuable benefits to customers, tangible and intangible, shall be strongly emphasized in all dialogues with the target audience. The brand shall make a promise to deliver valuable benefits to prospects in exchange for their commitment, for instance, it will deliver accurate, updated first-hand information, news, educative and innovative material, technological updates, interesting perspectives,

current offers, etc. Discussions shall pro-actively encourage the audience to respond and participate, and invite participants to like posts and comment on them. There should always be something value-adding for the customer in order to entice him to subscribe to the brand site. Adding creativity, visuals, images or videos to social brand posts that otherwise have enticing titles and short appealing structure, will increase its chances of being liked and shared. Getting the audience to follow can be facilitated with the help of influencers' posts and opinions and voluntary brand advocates. Creating unique traditions for the brand that are interesting to the audience can increase the chances of audience involvement and achieve trust. For example, weekly chats, weekly topics for discussions and posts with hashtags (#), e.g. "stupid question day", "motivation day", "my ideal home", weekly questions or even weekly games can generate impressive participation rates and lead to conversions. Coming up with own hashtag may prompt trends and increase the number of followers.

Website and blog. On-site incitement to action is important in this step. Through specific on-site customer pages, accessible through links or landing pages, the brand's promise to the customer can be further emphasized. Customer pages shall describe customer value-adding benefits, such as personalization option, downloads, special deals, data security, and offer a registration option for the users to gain access to additional customer benefits. The landing pages shall clearly state the online value proposition, demonstrating short appealing brand messages and emphasizing value for the user. The landing pages shall offer educative information, visuals, videos or downloadable material on the topic of interest. An example of an effective landing page is an infographic "Why choose Salusfin?" showing customer benefits and providing a call-to-action, such as a quote or contact request; short video clips or animations that address specific topics in a creative, funny, entertaining, yet informative way. Video and visual content tends to have a positive effect on conversion. On-site syndication, sharing options and calls-to actions help increasing user conversion. Calls-to-action can be an email or blog subscription, an enquiry, a blog RSS feed or content download suggestion. However, they shall not include long filling lists to collect information from the user. They should be simple and easy for users, not requiring many steps, mouse clicks or long reading time from the prospects, otherwise they might leave. Cookies are an effective tool not only for collecting the information about visitors, but more importantly, to provide meaning-

ful content to the right prospects. Online chat is another effective tool for offering participative content and increasing the chances of prospect to convert. Another way to achieve credibility and conversion rate is to display trust badges that assure the customer that the website is secure. Conversion tactics are presented hereafter in *Table 4*.

Table 4. Conversion tactics for website and blog.

Target audience	Intent	Format/Tools	Topic examples
Private	Educate/inform	Reports, guides eNews, press releases Long blog posts Infographics Interviews Animations, videos	Comparisons, product/ service limitations, perspectives, vision and future opportunities, examples of use, technology insights
	Adds-on	Calls-to-action	Subscriptions, quotes
Private /B2B	Boosting brand credibility	Data-driven blog posts Data-driven visual presentations Partner details	Data backed stories, integrated data from databases, statistics, research, charts, infographics, visuals, Q&A, tips
	Value in use	Opinion pieces Testimonials Comments Participation platform Live chat tools	Use cases, storytelling Authentic stories Personal experiences Shared stories Interactive online support
	Promise	Customer page Trust badge	Additional customer value: personalization, downloads, special deals, safety
Private	Sharing/syndicating	Syndication options Sharing options Participation platform	News updates RSS feeds Blog posts
B2B	Inform	eBooks Demonstrations Webinars Presentations/videos Infographics Interviews	Comparisons, perspectives, vision, technology/energy/ security insights, product potential, guidance, technical tips

4.4.4 Engagement tactics for involvement

Social media. Engagement strategy in social brand sites is about encouraging active participation of fans in content creation through discussions, feedback, comments, shares and mashups – all forms of active communication. For more efficient mashups, comments and user experiences from own website can be shared in social media platforms. Brand communication aims at further convincing the fans of brand values, unique benefits, credibility and trust. Specific member only benefits shall be emphasized in posts. The communication shall enable “capturing”, in other words enticing the fans via mean-

ingful topics of conversations, special treatment and customized approach. Fan special treatment features in social media can be, e.g. “information for fans only”, “special offer”, fan questions and other types of fan activity. Fans can participate in contests, for instance, being encouraged to post content and share experiences using specific hashtags. Through conversations with the followers, Salusfin can perform social monitoring and listening that allows to gain better insights, to gather topics of concern, interest or curiosity, and truly help, support and advise the fans in their everyday lives by creating value in terms of practical benefits for the fans. The aim is to reinforce the positive sentiment of the brand, gain trust and deliver additional value to customers, by guiding the fans through positive brand experience, allowing fans to experience the product in a different way and discover personal benefits, providing support and assistance throughout the engagement process. Moreover, one of the primary functions of social media communication at that stage is a strong emphasis on accurate and effective customer service, requiring continuous monitoring, follow up on conversations and accurate and timely response and interaction. Furthermore, through social brand posts and links, followers are referred to Salusfin website landing pages with relevant information and a customer area for login.

Website and blog. Through links and posts, fans are redirected to the main content hub, the website or the blog, where they land on preferred pages with more specific actionable content, for instance campaigns, feedback form, questionnaire, etc. Fans are encouraged to spend more time on product/brand pages or specific blog post, read the available material and user-generated content, share it through sharing/syndicating options and comment using a communication platform. Moreover, via on-site login option fans are redirected to more customized content, i.e. membership content. Both private consumers and B2B customers can access Salusfin customized member space with targeted member content, such as offers, checklists, product features, demos, reports, price lists, calculations, etc. The member space can have a special name as to emphasize its customized approach and membership benefits, for instance Salusfin Plus, Salusfin Extra, Salusfin Insider. The names of the membership system shall be distinctive for B2B and private consumers. *Table 5* illustrates main engagement tactics.

Table 5. Engagement tactics for website and blog.

Target audience	Intent	Format/Tools	Topic examples
Private /B2B	Help & support	Product info, demos Online chat tool Helpdesk Discussion forum Feedback tool On-site search engine Expert blog	Technical support Guides, manuals Visuals, demos How-tos User experiences Expert blog
Private	Special treatment	Salusfin customized member space	Preferred pages, app downloads, how-to videos, application updates, product features
	Consumer value	Special offers Discounts Product visualization	Free shipping First order discount Customization options
B2B	Customization	Login for personalization option	Customer preferences, alerts, price lists, demos, reports, calculations
	Business value	Business deals Discounts/offers Campaigns Product visualization	Free shipping Volume discounts Partnership offers Comparisons, demos

4.4.5 Nurturing tactics for keeping

Through nurturing tactics Salusfin focuses on supporting the fans' choice of brand commitment, maintaining their involvement, building an ongoing relationship with them, and taking initiatives that ultimately motivate a purchase. For Salusfin, nurturing tactics are a way to make engaged fans feel special, appreciated and valued by the brand by treating them in a "special" and personal way. Segmentation of the fan base shall be done according to common characteristics, interests, gender, age or other relevant features to enable more accurate targeting of loyal fans via messages, offers and communication. Communication initiative with the loyal fans shall be relevant, beneficial and personalized, as loyal fans expect to have access to timely information and personalized content addressed especially to them: getting in touch with fans through personalized messages, offering exclusive deals and discounts, providing preferred content feed through newsletters, sending reminder emails with special offers, arranging limited customer campaigns and promotions. Moreover, when engaging into conversations with loyal fans, it is important to show that the brand takes notice of them and appreciates them, for instance, by following the loyal fans, liking and sharing their posts, commenting and responding to their content. In return, loyal fans would be more motivated and willing to share and refer brand content, participate in content generation and curation,

to review and comment, to provide feedback and become advocates for the brand. Special treatment of loyal fans can involve additional attention to fan personas by thanking people for being loyal, sending “thank you” messages and mails, posting “thank you” and “congratulation” notes, sending “congratulations” messages and mails on important dates, sending invitations to special events and meetings, such as free testing or a feedback session. Loyal fans can be invited to write brand related reviews, give ratings and endorsements in different social media platforms, and even become blog guests against a valuable benefit or a gift. Valued and appreciated fans can have a significant impact on brand reputation and positive brand sentiment in social media, which is extremely beneficial for the brand. Increased fan retention and involvement can be achieved by establishing a brand community, where like-minded users can interact and share their testimonials, and reach a high level of brand engagement. In terms of product offering, communication with the fan base shall emphasize additional benefits and unique features available for customers, and thus stimulate the purchase. Salusfin customer will be offered a truly unique personal service via an app that will keep the customer connected to the brand 24/7 and enable him to communicate directly and accurately with the helpdesk, send and receive personal information instantly, and have direct and easy access to any resources via a mobile device.

4.5 Actions

Strategies and tactics need proper execution. In this particular strategic planning step, actions refer to specific activities, tasks and operational choices behind the tactical steps. This chapter produces strategic guidelines for Salusfin, a Digital Marketing Communication Roadmap, presented in *Figure 12*. The roadmap is supported by three Action Plans corresponding to each phase of the roadmap, which present detailed descriptions of actionable initiatives in each action phase. The digital marketing communication roadmap for Salusfin (*Figure 12*) illustrates the main phases of actions for one year ahead.

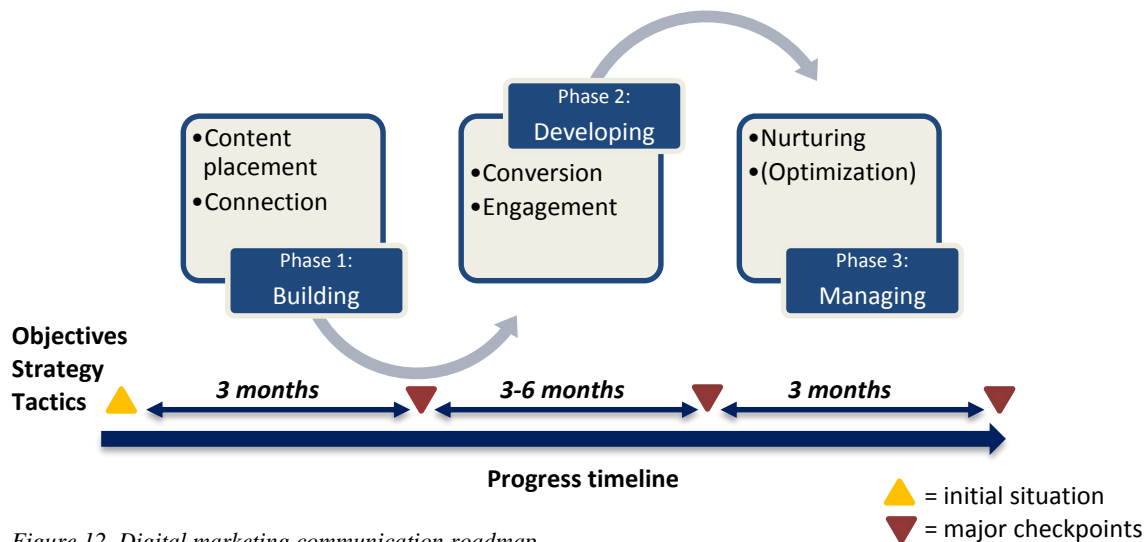


Figure 12. Digital marketing communication roadmap.

Phase 1 "Building" of estimated duration of three months, includes the Content Placement Strategy and the Connection Strategy aiming at reaching and connecting with the target audience (RA steps of RACE+GI). Phase 2 "Developing" requires longer time commitment of three to six months, and involves Conversion Strategy and Engagement Strategy aiming at converting and engaging the target audience (CE steps). Phase 3 "Managing" is focused on the Nurturing Strategy, its estimated time duration is three months, it aims at retaining fans, maintaining brand engagement, governing and perfecting a relationship with them, and converting them into sales-ready leads (G step). The Optimization step is also part of Phase 3, corresponding to the I (=improvement) activities of RACE+GI, it is reviewed in the Control step of the digital strategy framework, presented in Chapter 4.6.

4.5.1 Phase 1: Building

The action plan for Phase 1 is presented in the following *Figure 13*.

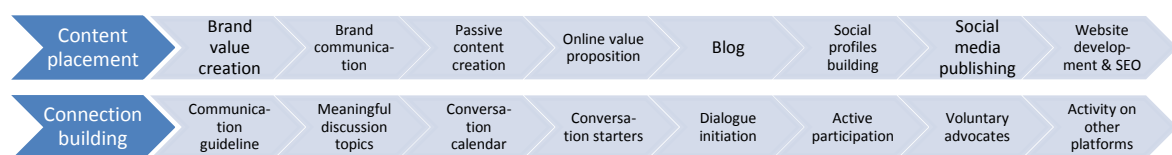


Figure 13. Action plan for Phase 1.

Table 6 demonstrates the strategic alignment of actions for Phase 1.

Table 6. Strategic action alignment for Phase 1 .

Phase 1: Building				
	Content placement		Connection	
Objectives	Building brand awareness		Building brand interaction	
Focus	Traffic, increasing outreach		Speaking and listening	
Platforms	Website, blog, social networking (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+), social sharing (YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, SlideShare)			
Time commitment	1 to 2 hours weekly		1-3 hours weekly	
Website update	Weekly		Weekly	
Blog publication	1 post/week		1-2 posts/week	
Social media publications & interactions	Twitter:	1 post/day	Twitter:	5 initiatives/day
	Facebook:	1 post/day	Facebook:	
	Google+:	2-3 posts/week	Google+:	5 initiatives/week
	LinkedIn:	2-3 posts/week	LinkedIn:	
	YouTube:	every 2 weeks	YouTube:	comment replies
	Instagram:	3 posts/week	Instagram:	5 initiatives/week
	Pinterest:	1 post/week	Pinterest:	2 initiatives/week
	SlideShare	1 post/month	SlideShare	link building
Content distribution	Manual content editing, content placement to website & blog Semi-automated distribution		Pre-emptive messages Semi-automated distribution to social brand sites	
Checkpoints	Website content placement, brand social profiles, brand social site content, blog content		Social media conversation calendar, communication guidelines, conversation starters & connections	
Free tools	<u>Creation</u> : platforms (Wordpress, Google Blogger), resource lists (Listly), content curation (Contently, Zite, Swayy, Storify, Kuratur, Zemanta, Buffer), content creation (Prezi, Visual.ly, Google Hangouts, Skitch), image creation (Canva), images (Dreamstime, PicJumbo, IM Free, Pixabay, Stockvault, Gratisography, Free Photos Bank), inspiration (Quora), freelancers (Contently) <u>Distribution</u> : content automation (Buffer, Hootsuite, SumoMe, Edgar, Zapier, Social Network Autoposter, Boom-erang, IFTTT (blog), content syndication (Feedburner and Onlywire for RSS, Twitterfeed for Twitter, Networked blogs app for Facebook, LinkedIn Twitter integration), video distribution (TubeMogul OneLoad), link building (Buzzstream), link/ URL shortening & tracking (bitly), curated content distribution (Zite) <u>Website</u> : Google Keyword Planner, Google Webmaster Tools, Google Word-tracker, SEOBook tools.			

Useful strategic tools for social media communication are communication guidelines and social media conversation calendar. *Communication guidelines* are based on the connection tactics and determine how interaction takes place in social media, how the prospects are approached, discussion maintained, questions answered, reactions (positive and negative), complaints and enquires are dealt with. *Social media conversation calendar* is a planning and monitoring tool for brand social site publishing. It helps to keep a schedule, manage/adjust content, and make the planning process more efficient. It is recommendable to plan the calendar one month ahead, determine conversation topics in advance and collect data on time. The calendar is created as a monthly worksheet

with weeks (Week 1, 2, 3 and 4) and columns for posts, each week including a post date, day of the week, weekly topics, titles, keywords and posts (content with supporting media/visuals) for social media platforms (Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn/Google+).

4.5.2 Phase 2: Developing

The action plan and the strategic alignment of actions for Phase 2 are presented below in *Figure 14* and *Table 7*.

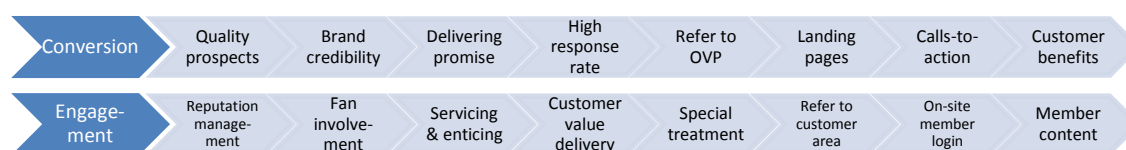


Figure 14. Action plan for Phase 2.

Table 7. Strategic action alignment for Phase 2.

Phase 2: Developing			
	Conversion		Engagement
<i>Objectives</i>	Achieve conversion to fans		Achieve loyal fan base
<i>Focus</i>	Earn trust and deliver a promise		Servicing active fan relationship
<i>Platforms</i>	Website, blog, social networking (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+), social sharing (YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, SlideShare)		
<i>Time commitment</i>	2-4 hours weekly		3-5 hours weekly
<i>Website update</i>	Weekly		Weekly
<i>Blog publication</i>	2-3 posts/week		3 posts/week
<i>Social media publications & interactions</i>	Twitter:	2 posts /day	5-10 initiatives /day
	Facebook:	1-2 posts/day	10 initiatives/day
	Google+:	3 posts/week	10 initiatives/day
	LinkedIn:	3 posts/week	10+ initiatives/day
	YouTube:	1 post/week	5 initiatives/week
	Instagram:	3-4 posts/week	10 initiatives/week
	Pinterest:	2 posts/week	5 initiatives/week
	SlideShare	2 posts/month	link building
<i>Content distribution</i>	Automated & scheduled distribution to social brand sites, website updates & manual editing, blog posts & updates, syndication		Automated & scheduled distribution to social brand sites, manual editing of pre-emptive messages, blog updates & syndication
<i>Check points</i>	Quality prospect group, response rate, OVP, landing pages, calls-to-action, conversions		Fan activity level, special offers & deals, customer area & content management, brand reputation
<i>Free tools</i>	<u>Distribution</u> : content automation (Buffer, Hootsuite, SumoMe, Edgar, Zapier, Social Network Autoposter, Boom-erang, IFTTT (blog), content syndication (Feedburner and Onlywire for RSS, Twitterfeed for Twitter, Networked blogs app for Facebook, LinkedIn Twitter integration), video distribution (TubeMogul OneLoad), link building (Buzzstream), link/ URL shortening & tracking (bitly, goo.gl), curated content distribution (Zite) <u>Website widgets</u> : Facebook Like Box Widget, Twitter widget, Skype <u>Sharing buttons</u> : AddThis, Like button,		

	<u>Customer service & online chat</u> : SnapEngage, Userlike, Olark <u>Comment section</u> : Disqus
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4.5.3 Phase 3: Managing

The action plan for Phase 3 is demonstrated in the following *Figure 15*.



Figure 15. Action plan for Phase 3.

Table 8 shows the strategic alignment of actions for Phase 3.

Table 8. Strategic action alignment for Phase 3.

Phase 3: Managing			
	Nurturing		
<i>Objectives</i>	Maintain brand engagement		
<i>Focus</i>	Sales-ready leads		
<i>Platforms</i>	Website, blog, social networking (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+), social sharing (YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, SlideShare)		
<i>Time commitment</i>	4-5 hours weekly		
<i>Website update</i>	Weekly		
<i>Blog publication</i>	2-3 posts/week		
<i>Social media publications & interactions</i>	Twitter:	2 posts /day	5-10 initiatives /day
	Facebook:	1-2 posts/day	10 initiatives/day
	Google+:	3 posts/week	10 initiatives/day
	LinkedIn:	3-4 posts/week	10+ initiatives/day
	YouTube:	1 post/week	5 initiatives/week
	Instagram:	3-4 posts/week	10 initiatives/week
	Pinterest:	2 posts/week	5 initiatives/week
	SlideShare	2 posts/month	link building
<i>Checkpoints</i>	Segmented customer groups, loyal fan mail list, pre-emptive and personalized messages, appreciation notes, offers and deals, customer content, content updates.		
<i>Content distribution</i>	Automated & scheduled distribution to social brand sites, automated distribution of emails, semi-automatic distribution of user generated on-site content		
<i>Free tools</i>	<u>Distribution</u> : content automation (Buffer, Hootsuite, SumoMe, Edgar, Zapier, Social Network Autoposter, Boom-erang, IFTTT (blog), content syndication (Feedburner and Onlywire for RSS, Twitterfeed for Twitter, Networked blogs app for Facebook, LinkedIn Twitter integration), video distribution (Tube-Mogul OneLoad), link building (Buzzstream), link/ URL shortening & tracking (bitly, goo.gl), curated content distribution (Zite) <u>User content sharing</u> : LiveCycle, Facebook Connect, Giggya		

4.5.4 Risk management

Risk management and contingency planning is an important part of an action plan, however often overlooked. For an action plan to be accurate, risk management issues should be given proper attention. This action step is focused on possible threats and changes that can occur in the digital and physical environment that can impact digital marketing communications efforts and/or damage brand reputation. Risk management involves risk identification (low, medium or high), response strategy (acceptance, mitigation, avoidance or transfer) and risk tracking. First step is an identification of internal and external risk factors. Common internal risks are availability and reliability of human resources, financial resources, stakeholders, partners, suppliers/supply chain, and corporate strategy changes. Common external risks are competitor substitute products, competitor business activities, regulatory and legal changes, natural disasters, loss of power, loss of internet connection, server and/or equipment failures, security risks (hacking, malware, cyber attacks), access failures, technology standards, technological advancements/ transformations and intellectual property. Most of Salusfin risks belong to the operational type of risks that are affected by the external threats. Salusfin needs to assess and prioritize risks by creating a risk register with risk detailed analysis, including risk description, process owner, probability, impact and determine adequate response. Risk responses provide practical recommendations for managing risk situations effectively. As digital environment and therefore risks are constantly changing, the threat environment of Salusfin needs to be monitored and researched on a regular basis to maintain risk register up to date and make necessary adjustments to own contingency plan. It is important not only to focus on a reactive response to the existing threats, but to consider increasing and future threats, and take a pro-active approach to risk management.

4.6 Control

The last step of the strategic planning framework is control. Multichannel Consistency Management (MCM) efforts are an integral part of the control function that oversees the digital marketing communication efforts. MCM is carried out and supervised by the Chief Sales and Marketing Officer in charge of Salusfin's digital marketing strategy. The MCM efforts ensure that brand related digital content, as part of owned media, is

coherent and consistent with brand online value proposition, brand message and brand strategy throughout all web platforms and online presence. Although online content may vary in forms and formats, the essence of the brand shall remain true and appropriate to the brand identity and values, keeping brand promises to the customers and ensuring that customers' expectations are met in the best way possible.

To manage the digital marketing communication efforts efficiently, accurately and smoothly, Salusfin has to put in place a control system that streamlines strategic actions, continuously monitors performance and ensures that strategic objectives are achieved. Control is needed to establish underperformance areas on time and undertake the necessary steps to stabilize the problem, e.g. risk management issues. It is also possible that the performance is higher than expected, which might require adjustments as well, e.g. allocating additional human resources, reviewing schedule, assigning more tasks.

The control process involves the following steps for control and optimization: social listening and performance monitoring, collecting and analyzing data, detecting areas for improvement, taking corrective actions and setting new goals. The optimization process continues further on to determine new strategies and tactics. The control and optimization process is illustrated in *Figure 16*.



Figure 16. Control and optimization process.

Listening and monitoring step of the control process refers to social listening and monitoring of the performance. Social listening is a crucial element of brand building that drives digital marketing communication efforts, and therefore needs to be monitored constantly. Important aspects of brand social listening involve: sentiment monitoring (sources of positive, neutral or negative sentiment), brand reputation monitoring, brand associations, popular topics, conversation locations, conversation reach, issue recognition (sentiment, keywords, volume), competitor monitoring (sentiment, shares/likes, conversations, topics, associations, issues), influencer and opinion leader identification

(by topic, by sentiment), response rate and effect on brand conversion based on time of day, frequency of posts, type of content.

Data collection and performance measurement are key activities of the follow up process of the control phase. Data collection is an essential task that needs to be performed frequently and carefully. Data from social listening and monitoring is collected and analyzed using specific monitoring tools. There is a number of useful, practical and manageable tools for tracking, collecting and analyzing data that ought to be used to keep control of digital marketing communication strategy, and make Salusfin's digital efforts more effective. Tools for social listening, performance monitoring, data collection, follow up and analysis are shown in *Table 9*.

Table 9. Monitoring, data collecting and analytical tools.

<i>Free tools</i>	<u>A/B testing</u> : Five Second Test, Google Content Experiments, Optimizely <u>Comment monitoring</u> : Google Trends, Comment Sniper, coComment <u>Competitor benchmarking</u> : SimilarWeb, HowSociable, SEMrush <u>Communities monitoring</u> : UserVoice, UserEcho, Commun.it <u>Conversion optimization</u> : Experiment.ly, AttentionWizard, Content Experiments, GoingUp, Conversion Critic, Conversion Voodoo, Clicky, Google Browser Size, ButtonOptimizer <u>Social engagement</u> : Klout, My Web Career, Cloze <u>Social monitoring</u> : Nutshellmail, HootSuite, Google Alerts/ Reader, Backtype Alerts, Google Realtime Search, Tweetdeck, Komfo <u>Social presence measurement</u> : HowSociable <u>Social search & analysis</u> : Social Mention, Tagboard, BlogPulse, AllTop, NOD3x, Social Seek, MonitorThis, Addictomatic, WhosTalkin.com <u>Social sharing metrics</u> : Buzzsumo, Socialcrawlytics <u>Image & video effectiveness</u> : Reachli, Netvibes <u>Tracking & analytics</u> : Google Analytics, Mixpanel, Twitter Analytics, Facebook Insights, LinkedIn Stats, WordPress Analytics <u>Usability reviewing & feedback</u> : Concept feedback, Peek, iPerceptions, UserEcho <u>Website analysis & optimization</u> : Google Webmaster Central, Google Webmaster Tools, Google Wordtracker, Pencil, Balsamiq, SEOBook tools, Web Page Analyzer <u>Website user experience (UX)/usability</u> : Loop11, UserTesting, GTMetrix, UXPunk, Spur, ClickHeat, Phostir, BrowserShots, CheckMyColors, Zurb, CamStudio
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Brand performance in social media, website and blog platforms needs to be monitored and measured closely and regularly. The metrics for performance measurement are the same key performance indicators or KPIs, which are determined in the objectives section (Chapter 4.2) of the strategic plan. As stated earlier, KPIs need regular performance review. By comparing the actual performance to the initial KPIs goals at each strategic tactical stage of RACE+G will enable to evaluate the progress step-by-step, refine and adjust actions when necessary. Control checkpoints for social listening, performance monitoring and data collection are presented in *Table 10*.

Table 10. Checkpoints for monitoring performance KPI's.

	Content placement	Connection	Conversion	Engagement	Nurturing
<i>Monitoring website traffic</i>	Visitors, visits from organic traffic, visit duration, unique visitors, bounce rate	Page views/ visits, popular pages, product page views, entry pages, exit pages, page duration, site retention, links	Repeat visits, form completions, newsletter subscriptions, content downloads, conversion rate, site retention 1+ minute and 2+ pages	Customer logins, churn rate, on-site feedback, content syndication & shares, site retention 3+ min and 3+ pages	Website retention 5+ min and 4+ pages, customer logins, onsite user content
<i>Website control</i>	Weekly traffic measurement, monthly follow-up, first/last day of month. Weekly validity updates: search keywords, links, search engine elements User testing: usability/user experience (UX), concept and A/B testing.				
<i>Brand social sites performance</i>	Visitors/views	Interactions, conversations, influencer contacts, brand mentions	Likes, fans/ followers, inquiries, interactions	Churn rate, loyal fans/ followers, shares, social discussion, social comments, mashups	Online reviews, referrals, recommendations, testimonials, articles, positive sentiment, established community, formed partnerships
<i>Social listening</i>	Sentiment monitoring (positive, neutral or negative sentiment), brand reputation, brand associations & attributes, popular topics, user testimonials, conversation locations, insights and issue recognition (sentiment, keywords, volume), competitor monitoring (sentiment, shares/likes, conversations, topics, associations, issues), influencer/opinion leader identification (by topic, sentiment or volume), response rate and effect on brand conversion (time of day, frequency and, type of content)				
<i>Social monitoring schedule</i>	Daily monitoring: Facebook & Twitter once/day, Google+ & LinkedIn 2 times/week, Instagram 3 times/ week, Pinterest once/ week, SlideShare 2 times/month		Daily social listening & brand reputation monitoring: Facebook & Twitter & Google+ 3-4 times/day, LinkedIn & Instagram 5 times/week, Pinterest 3-4 times/week, SlideShare 4 times/month		
<i>Blog performance monitoring</i>	Blog visitors	Blog post views	Blog retention 1+ minute	Blog syndication, blog retention 3+ minutes	Blog syndication, blog retention 5+ minutes
	Blog posts, blog comments, discussion forum, communities				
<i>Other social sites</i>	Discussion boards, communities, bookmarking sites, publishing and aggregator sites				

Optimization is an integral part of control activities that enables fine-tuning, making of corrections, adjustments or improvements to faulty, inefficient or over-performing areas determined throughout control and follow up activities. Optimization is the last and important element of the RACE+GI model that stands for I=improvement. The optimization targets are established in the analytical stage of performance measurements by diagnosing the situation, analyzing the results of performance and outlining areas for improvement/adjustment. Appropriate corrective actions are then defined, tasks distributed

and schedules set for changes to be carried out. As the process is continuous, the next step shall be establishing of new objectives for the new strategic step “Objectives”.

The control step involves reporting on the results and setting specific checkpoints for monitoring and measuring digital marketing communication performance. Reporting shall be done on a regular basis to keep track of company’s digital performance, to evaluate which activity areas need adjustment or improvement, and help defining the appropriate corrective measures and take actions. Reporting recommendations for Salusfin are the following:

- Initial situation review
- Daily reporting: social network listening, data collection
- Weekly reporting: website, blog and social site measurements, data collection
- Monthly follow-up: website performance comparison (first/last day of month), social media platform monthly summary, competitor benchmarking
- Quarterly reports: KPI measurements and goals, strategy and tactics alignment (Q1/3 months, Q2/6 months, Q3/9 months, Q4/12 months).

Moreover, management of digital marketing communication strategy requires appropriate resource allocation. Human, financial and time resources need to be assigned correctly and accurately by the supervising Chief Sales and Marketing Officer. Realistic assessment of time commitment, control of activities, schedule and resources conformance shall support the digital strategic initiatives and actions, ensure value-adding customer service and continuous content delivery.

Hereby Chapter 4 presented a comprehensive customer-centric digital marketing strategy for Salusfin. The digital strategy incorporates numerous opportunities of digital marketing into an actionable strategic plan for the company. The strategy offers an extensive strategic vision for Salusfin and presents a systematic approach to building, developing and managing digital marketing communication efforts. It outlines the benefits of digital marketing for the company, identifies the appropriate methods, tools and techniques to capture, engage, retain customers and create added value for them. Above all, it provides critical guidelines for ensuring an efficient delivery, follow up and optimization of digital marketing communication efforts.

5 EXPERT INTERVIEW INPUT

The empirical data from two expert interviews with Fredrik Holmén of Mirum and Rasmus Östman of Genero, provided valuable contribution to the study. The interviewees offered a professional perspective on digital marketing related issues, strategic planning process, strategic models, and evaluated author's own strategic approach as well as provided real-life practical examples, professional opinions and relevant tips.

The empirical findings have confirmed that planning models and frameworks must be used as a reference and a basis for strategic planning. Although the SOSTAC planning framework was not previously familiar to the interviewees, they emphasized that the steps of the planning process are common to most strategic models used by professional strategists (e.g. Mirum's own planning framework, "Playing to Win" strategy). The theoretical approach used by the author in the current study, in particular SOSTAC framework, was evaluated by the experts as an applicable and logical model for strategic planning. Furthermore, the RACE model for reaching, acting, converting and engaging the target audience, has received more endorsement as a strategic model for digital marketing communication efforts, aligning digital marketing tactics to business objectives. Fredrik Holmén referred to a similar model REAN, standing for Reach-Engage-Activate-Nurture, employed for digital marketing communication. Important observation made by the expert stated that the nurturing part of strategy is very important from the customer perspective and loyalty creation aspect, and thus cannot be neglected. It was particularly useful to gain a professional advice for leveraging the RACE + G strategic steps, covering the "Governance" step that corresponds to the nurturing strategy and nurturing tactics in the digital strategy, which the author applied in the study.

A significant input was made by Rasmus Östman, who introduced a different angle to digital branding strategy, leveraging a so-called ZMOT ("Zero Moment of Truth") framework, originally created by Procter & Gamble and later developed by Google. ZMOT refers to online information search performed by consumers in the awareness stage/pre-shopping stage of the decision making process. ZMOT approach to digital marketing suggests that via internet and digital resources empowered and knowledge-thirsty consumers are enabled to look for easily accessible and extensive digital infor-

mation by performing a web research and gathering information through online reviews, videos, sites and social networks and educating themselves before making any purchase decisions. After the purchase is made and brand engagement level is reached (Second Moment of Truth), the customer shares his brand experience online and his SMOT experience becomes another person's Zero Moment of Truth. In terms of digital strategy, ZMOT concept relates to digital marketing communication strategy's early phase. The main lesson that was drawn from ZMOT in regards to digital strategy, is that it is crucial to find own brand's Zero Moment of Truth. In other words, defining the brand from the consumer's perspective, determining the brand position in consumer minds and setting achievement goals for the target group in terms of brand awareness and brand perception. According to Mr. Östman, setting objectives and building brand awareness with a strong brand vision, a clear brand promise, a brand personality, a great brand story, , brand communication focusing on brand differentiating factors, brand values or functional benefits and customer experience, is a way to "winning the ZMOT", which is a crucial step in a digital strategy. Moreover, when focusing on a big picture, ZMOT can also be viewed as a specific approach to digital strategy, which implies that effective digital communications and extensive online presence are crucial for a brand to gain visibility and reach the audience. In other words, taking a consumer perspective to the brand and ensuring that brand related communication and content is accurate and relevant, i.e. what the audience is expecting to find and going beyond their expectations, available in the right places, and easily accessible. Brand's digital presence shall be efficient so that the brand outreach is extensive. Online information shall be available on a wide range of existing and accessible online tools and platforms. The brand communication and brand message are accurate, relevant and consistent in all range of platforms, and user experience is efficient via compelling, comfortable and easily accessible digital content, i.e. easy and quick to access from various devices, incorporating visuals, videos and other enticing formats, and easily findable content (optimized for search). These aspects were considered in the development of a digital strategy for Salusfin.

Setting achievement goals and clear objectives is the fundamental task of any strategic planning process. According to the experts' opinion, it is often one of the main challenges encountered in professional life as this crucial step is often neglected. Although it may seem like stating the obvious, but the digital marketing strategy must support the

overall business objectives, and digital targets shall be aligned with business goals. A clear vision needs to be defined before taking any actions. Fredrik Holmén maintains that digital marketing strategic targets have to be set based on the areas needing improvement and referred to the REAN model or in the author's case to the RACE+G model stages. Thus, the top-level strategic goals should be based on the model as well. Referring to the strategic approach in the study, where the author defined digital sub-strategies and prioritizations of content type for each phase of the RACE+G model, the expert opinion was that the chosen approach is logical and coherent, and the nurturing strategy has to be included. In his professional opinion, the "Reach" step can be other than content, for instance, traditional paid-for ads and paid media, which can be targeted and efficient. Mr. Holmén commented that the digital content can be purchased and paid for, and therefore it is difficult to draw a strict line between owned, earned or paid media as they tend to mix. In case of Salusfin, however, the paid media is not considered due to financial restrictions, and therefore the digital content is owned and has to be developed by the company. As for the earned media, as Mr. Östman rightfully observed, it might take a significant amount of time before the brand reaches online awareness and the target audience gets involved in customer-led content creation.

Both experts strongly emphasize that understanding of the target audience, their wants, needs and setting customer goals is an extremely important aspect of strategy. It is crucial to be able to segment customers according to their characteristics and choose the appropriate approach for each customer group. In terms of digital strategy RACE+G, different stages need different focus and precise targeting. The following are some expert opinions and comments regarding each strategic step of RACE+G. For reaching, own website and content building are the focus, content has to provide a great and transparent story, communicating value and brand promise, website and content have to be optimized (e.g. keywords, building organic traffic). For the interaction phase, the brand social sites need to be prioritized, where encouraged discussion and meaningful communication takes place, and fast response rate is essential parts of this stage. To convert the audience and get involved with the brand, the target audience's needs have to be met by appealing to the emotions and needs, important aspects of this stage are target audience segmentation and re-targeting visitors with information, messages and offers, ensuring that landing pages are efficient. For engagement phase, offering more

personalized and concrete value and something in return for a relationship (special offer, special content for followers, invitations), maintaining continuous discussion, reminding and following up, providing preferred content are important activities. Finally, for nurturing strategy, following and tracking customer behavior and engagement, paying attention to customers' interests, keeping up the relationship by providing value, personalized offers and content, but not being too pushy with newsletters or updates, building a community, are key aspects of the last step.

According to experts, key aspects of the digital marketing communication strategy are:

- Clear achievement goals
- Customer goals & customer needs
- Brand vision (concept, promise, identity, message)
- Segmentation of the target audience
- Defined metrics for targets and KPIs
- Digital marketing automation and monitoring tools
- Social media monitoring: conversations, brand sentiment, brand attributes
- Benchmarking of competitors
- Follow up and optimization.

A few expert recommendations for Salusfin:

- Have a clear and targeted USP (unique selling proposition)
- Have a clear brand message with customer benefits
- Have courage and be bold
- Do things differently, opposite from competition
- Tap into people's emotions (touching, funny, etc.)
- Tell an inspiring and transparent story
- Be creative, don't use clichés
- Be aware of trends and counter trends
- Be aware of competitors
- Avoid "vanity" metrics
- Integrate, combine and mix platforms
- Substitute limited financial resources with larger human resources.

The summarizing words of advice from the experts are the following:

“Stay within your niche, but stand out, be bold and be different enough from your competitors” – Fredrik Holmén of Mirum Agency.

“Be relevant, focus on “why?” as to “why do we exist?” and get that story to the media and the influencers, tell how you are going to change the market and the industry, but remember to be honest, personal and humble” – Rasmus Östman of Genero.

6 REFLECTIVE DISCUSSION

The theoretical review of the present study provided a solid theoretical base, necessary knowledge and input data in terms of digital marketing theory and concepts, relevant and applicable models and guidelines that the author leveraged to create a digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin. The empirical findings from expert interviews added a professional opinion on strategic models and evaluated the strategic framework developed by the author in the empirical part of the study. The empirical data supplied professional expertise and an external perspective on the practical application of models in the digital strategy, and therefore contributed in a meaningful and practical way to the study outcome.

The empirical part of the present thesis study aimed at addressing the research questions 1. What can Salusfin achieve with a digital marketing communication strategy? and 2. How can a digital marketing communication strategy contribute to reaching, interacting, converting, engaging and nurturing the target audience for Salusfin? The research questions are answered thoroughly in the digital marketing communication strategy developed by the author in Chapter 4. The study has shown that a digital strategy guides effective digital marketing communication efforts that enable customer-focused brand building, targeted content creation, brand communication, digital outreach, interaction with target audience, customer service and customer experience to achieve user engagement and brand advocacy.

By adopting a digital strategy, Salusfin can take advantage of an effective and systematic approach to building, developing and managing digital marketing communication efforts. The main strategic tactical steps of the study outline how Salusfin can:

- 1) Implement a *content placement strategy* to build online brand awareness through passive content, online value proposition and brand communication, resulting in increased website traffic and digital outreach;
- 2) Implement a *connection strategy* to initiate and build brand interaction by focusing on relevant communication with the target audience, performing social listening activities and providing timely and accurate interactive content;
- 3) Implement a *conversion strategy* to maintain meaningful interaction and support conversion to fans, followers and subscribers through quality communication, participative and engaging activities, emphasized benefits, and focusing on earning trust, boosting brand credibility, delivering a promise and inciting to action;
- 4) Implement an *engagement strategy* to reach brand engagement and acquire a loyal fan base through value-adding servicing, special treatment, sizzling and customized content delivery, personal approach, active communication, mashup and user engaging activities to maintain fan relationship;
- 5) Implement a *nurturing strategy* to maintain brand engagement by focusing on developing sales-ready leads by supplying highly personalized content, performing accurate segmentation, taking a unique approach through targeted service and personal communication, showing appreciation and attention, taking initiatives to motivate a purchase and encourage content generation and curation.

Strategic approach to digital marketing communication planning provided a comprehensive vision for Salusfin, outlined main benefits and opportunities of digital strategy implementation, and provided guidelines for digital development and management. Theory application and empirical findings have shown that the strategy function is the foundation of an effective, goal-oriented and logically structured planning process. Strategy in the digital marketing context helps to focus the digital marketing efforts on the right areas, define the objectives, determine appropriate tactical actions and prioritize tools for reaching the goals, and managing the entire process by performing continuous control, allocating resources and regularly monitoring and tracking performance.

The study findings have shown that a customer-centric approach to digital marketing communication strategy is a crucial factor of an effective digital marketing initiative. The digital marketing communication strategy developed by the author provided a cus-

customer-centered insight and a particular focus on customer perspective, while aligning the customer orientation with broader corporate strategic digital marketing goals. The author evaluates that the digital marketing communication strategy, no matter how logical it might seem to the organization, is impossible to realize without a strong customer focus and customer orientation. The customer orientation element determines not only the junction point where customer perspective and corporate goals intersect, but most importantly, enables to create an effective strategy for exceptional customer experience.

The digital strategy developed for Salusfin delivered thorough answers to the research questions. The results of the study satisfy the initial aims of the research, and the present work has reached its primary goals.

7 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the digital marketing communication strategy requires significant resource investments. Although financial investments are quite minimal, as digital marketing initiatives are cost-effective, human and time investments have to be substantial. Therefore, it is essential for management to estimate time commitment accurately, set realistic schedules and short-term objectives, and allocate human resources accordingly. To implement, maintain and develop the digital marketing strategy, digital marketing tasks shall be assigned to the right people, with adequate skills and capabilities and available time. Human resources shall support the digital strategy through continuous delivery, control, follow up and optimization of digital communication and content.

As Salusfin plans to employ its core team to perform digital marketing tasks without resorting to outsourcing, it is crucial to identify strengths and competencies within own or collaborative team, and match them with specific digital tasks and responsibilities. The managerial role and function are very important to make decisions, coordinate actions, control the execution and monitor the performance to ensure that the digital marketing communication runs smoothly, digital tactics are implemented efficiently and digital tools are used to their full potential.

It is important to note that although the strategic operational plan is comprehensive, it is not aiming to be permanent and is not expected to be completely accurate due to unforeseen factors, and therefore may be subject to adjustments and updates as circumstances

change, new data becomes available and unexpected needs emerge. Strategic planning provides main focal points and guidelines of a course of actions that supports a goal-oriented vision. However, as challenges arise, the strategic plan might need revision. Thus, management is required to have a flexible approach to digital strategy implementation, ensuring a continuous follow-up of strategic plan execution and dedicating enough resources for necessary adjustments.

Furthermore, the domain of digital marketing is constantly evolving and transforming. Even industry experts have trouble predicting in which direction digital marketing might develop further, how fast it will be changing, which innovations or inventions might come up and which future trends and breakthroughs might emerge that will have an impact on the whole field or revolutionize business. Therefore, it is extremely important to keep an eye on how the digital field is evolving, follow the trends and keep track of latest digital updates and news. It is highly advisable to regularly check useful digital marketing resources, such as Business2Community, Content Marketing Institute, Digital Current, eContent, eMarketer, Moz Learning Resources, Search Engine Watch, SEtalks, Smart Insights, Trendspottr, Social Media Today, Social Media Examiner, ReadWrite. There is a great number of available online resources, including the ones mentioned earlier, that are extremely helpful in screening for ideas, inspirations and possible topics for digital content and posts. It is also worthwhile mentioning that competitor benchmarking provides additional sources of information and ideas.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The outcome of the study is a customer-centric digital marketing communication strategy for Salusfin that fulfills the needs of the company, benefits the company and creates value for the customers. The digital strategy defined the digital marketing communication goals, strategies, tactics, actions and control activities for achieving the goals in the digital context, as well as presented recommendations for the company. The study established the prioritization areas of digital marketing communications that are relevant to the company, applicable to company's current situation, fit company's resources and conform to company's needs and requirements. Therefore, the study outcome satisfies the initial aims of the research.

For a small company, digital presence is crucial, whereas effective digital presence is a key success factor. Company's original website remains key information resource, a communication hub for the company, the brand and the product. The competitive advantage criteria for Salusfin lies in its online value proposition, relevant, rich and targeted content and brand promise. Salusfin brand aims to be associated with its unique value proposition, customer benefits and superior customer experience. Social media platforms represent an extremely important tool for building brand identity, reputation and trust, forming relationships with customers, providing customer service, enhancing customer experiences and collecting customer insight. Brand social sites with user-generated content serve as important sources for consumer-led knowledge, practical customer insights, experience sharing, and provide unique opportunities for the brand to get truly closer to its customers. Blogging is crucial for small business, as blogs offer an effective means to make purely technical companies communicate brand values and brand promises efficiently, be helpful and valuable, and create enticing content that drives traffic. Even most common solutions can provide creative, engaging and cutting-edge content and offer unique customer experiences.

As competition intensifies, building a strong brand with a unique personality, effective communication, relevant and targeted online value proposition, value-adding content and focus on target market needs, are critical factors for reaching online success for Salusfin. Consistent brand communication, creative and customer-centric approach, differentiation, continuous control, optimization, flexibility, and a digital strategy, ensure effectiveness of digital marketing communication efforts.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Interview Guide

1. Please state your position and main responsibilities in the company.
2. Are you familiar with the SOSTAC strategic planning framework? Do you use it for strategic planning? If not, which other models/tools do you use for strategic planning?
4. In your opinion, what are the key characteristics of a successful digital marketing communication strategy?
5. Which digital marketing communication tools do you find most efficient?
6. Which digital marketing communication tactics do you find most efficient?
7. What are the main challenges of a digital marketing communication strategy?
8. Can you share your experience of successful digital marketing communication strategy implementation. Why has it been successful? How do you measure success?
9. The RACE (Reach-Act-Convert-Engage) strategic digital marketing planning model is about reaching, interacting, converting and engaging customers. Do you use this model?
10. I find that each stage of RACE corresponds to a specific strategy: reaching - content strategy, action/interaction - connection strategy, conversion - conversion strategy, engagement - engagement strategy. Do you agree with this way of thinking? Do you have another approach?
11. In your opinion, what are the key characteristics of a great content strategy?
12. Which tactics do you find most efficient for building brand awareness?
13. What are the key characteristics of an efficient contact strategy?
14. Which tactics are most efficient for connecting with prospects and increasing brand interaction?
15. What are the key characteristics of an efficient conversion strategy?
16. In your opinion, which tactics can be used to achieve high level of conversion?
17. What are the key characteristics of an efficient engagement strategy?
18. In your opinion, which tactics can be used to achieve brand engagement?

19. Which tactics/actions would you recommend to consider when creating a digital marketing strategy for a small IT start-up with limited resources and no previous experience of digital marketing?
20. What tips can you give for an edgy type of digital marketing communication?

APPENDIX 2: Conversation Prism



The Conversation Prism v 4.0 (2015). Source: ConversationPrism.com